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## CONTRIBUTORS

**Jane Mayer** ("Schmooze or Lose," p. 24), who won the 2011 George Polk Award for magazine reporting, has been covering politics for *The New Yorker* since 1995. "The Dark Side" is her most recent book.

**John Cassidy** (Comment, p. 19) writes the Rational Irrationality blog on [newyorker.com](http://newyorker.com). His latest book is "How Markets Fail: The Logic of Economic Calamities."

**Tad Friend** (The Talk of the Town, p. 20) has been a staff writer since 1998.

**Ian Frazier** (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 32), a longtime contributor to the magazine, will publish his first novel, "The Cursing Mommy's Book of Days," in October.

**Jeremy Eichler** ("String Theorist," p. 34) is the classical-music critic for the *Boston Globe*.

**Joyce Carol Oates** (Poem, p. 44) has a new story collection coming out next month, "Black Dahlia & White Rose," which includes a short story previously published in *The New Yorker*.

**Bruce McCall** (Cover) is a frequent contributor of art and humor pieces.

**Oliver Sacks** ("Altered States," p. 40) is a practicing neurologist and the author of many books, including "The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat," "Musicophilia," and "Awakenings." His new book, "Hallucinations," will be published in November.

**Jon Lee Anderson** ("The War Within," p. 48) has published several books, including "Guerrillas: Journeys in the Insurgent World."

**Alice Munro** (Fiction, p. 58) is the award-winning author of twelve short-story collections. Her thirteenth, "Dear Life: Stories," comes out in November.

**C. K. Williams** (Poem, p. 65) will publish, in October, a new book of poems, "Writers Writing Dying," and a book of essays, "In Time: Poets, Poems, and the Rest."

**Leo Carey** (A Critic at Large, p. 70) is a senior editor at the magazine.

**Alex Ross** (Musical Events, p. 78) has published two books, "The Rest Is Noise" and "Listen to This," which are available in paperback.

**Emily Nussbaum** (On Television, p. 82) writes the television column for the magazine.

## THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

The Political Scene: Analysis, podcasts, cartoons, video, and more about the 2012 campaign, at [newyorker.com/politics](http://newyorker.com/politics). / The New Yorker Out Loud: *Oliver Sacks* talks about his experiments with drugs in the sixties. / Ask the Author: *Jon Lee Anderson* answers readers' questions about Syria. / Blogs: Daily Comment by *Amy Davidson* and *Steve Coll*; *John Cassidy* on politics; *Richard Brody* on movies; the Borowitz Report; essays on books at Page-Turner; slide shows at Photo Booth; and more. / Animated cartoons, the caption contest, and cover jigsaw puzzles. / Our complete archive, back to 1925.



# THE MAIL

## THE BEST MEDICINE

Atul Gawande's article comparing restaurant chains to hospital chains focusses on what it is like to eat at the Cheesecake Factory, but overlooks how much more pleasant it often feels to work at a mom-and-pop bistro with a vested interest in the local community ("Big Med," August 13th & 20th). Many service employees, unfortunately, do not have the choice to forsake fast-food joints for jobs at sole proprietorships, unlike health-care professionals, who often do have a choice. Moreover, the less autonomy and joy that physicians find in their work environments, the less likely they are to bring passion and enthusiasm to their labors. If hospitals become Pizza Huts, many prospective medical students may instead pursue careers in biotech or scientific academia which afford more freedom. Comparisons with fast-food restaurants, air safety, or military organization may offer some insights regarding how to improve health-care delivery, but it is essential to remember that these are merely comparisons, not genuine models. As both a practicing physician and a patient, I do not want my medicine prepared and served one-size-feeds-all, like a beet salad with goat cheese.

*Jacob M. Appel, M.D.  
Department of Psychiatry  
The Mount Sinai Hospital  
New York City*

Gawande's excellent article seems to overlook the question of personal legal liability. Under the current tort system, the providing physician (irrespective of his or her employment status with a health-care system) may be held personally liable for an adverse patient outcome and, as a result, subject to malpractice litigation. In contrast, a customer who claims to have become ill from consuming the miso-salmon entrée described in the article is likely to hold the restaurant itself—not individual servers, cooks, or members of the prep team—responsible for his or her illness. To the best of my knowledge, individual workers in the kitchens of restaurants are not required to carry work-related

liability insurance, but most practicing physicians, whether employed by "big med" chains or not, must carry individual malpractice insurance. Thus, if conformity with system-sanctioned recipes for care will be key to the success of the new health-care order, employed physicians should not be held personally liable for poor outcomes. It is also imperative that health-care leaders and the public recognize the limitations of cookbook medicine; what may work for surgical specialties such as orthopedics may not work for noninvasive cognitive disciplines such as infectious diseases, in which success may be heavily contingent upon patient-specific factors such as genetic profile, immune function, and out-of-hospital social support. The overzealous and indiscriminate application of one-size-fits-all medicine will likely also lead to its downfall.

*Farrin A. Manian, M.D.  
St. Louis, Mo.*

Gawande's piece on bringing evidence-based management to health care struck me as deeply relevant to the United States' education problems. Politicians love to discuss what makes teachers "good" or "bad," but rarely examine the fact that we send most of our teachers into the classroom essentially alone and unsupervised after a brief training period. A system in which teachers were observed (perhaps by camera, remotely) on a daily basis by experienced classroom teachers—who then gave them evidence-based tips for improving performance, testing, and content—might remarkably improve our schools. This might also create a system for eliminating bad teachers, by assessing them on their classroom behavior and course content; in short, by judging them on the only things that teachers can directly control.

*Rachel Carey  
Belleville, N.J.*

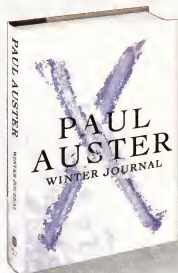
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## GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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26	27	28	22	23	24	25
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### THIS WEEK

#### THE THEATRE FAMILY RELATIONS

The Mint Theatre is dedicated to reviving long-forgotten plays. Its season première, "Mary Broome," is a comedy by Allan Monkhouse, written in 1911 and last performed in New York in 1919, about a maid who becomes involved with her employer's son. Jonathan Bank directs. (See page 8.)

#### NIGHT LIFE COME ON, IRENE

Hurricane Irene was downgraded to a tropical

storm by the time it hit the city last summer, but it still caused the cancellation of many concerts, including the annual Afro-Punk Festival, in Brooklyn's Commodore Barry Park. The shows are back this year, with Erykah Badu, Gym Class Heroes, Janelle Monáe, and others. (See page 9.)

#### ART BREAKING NEWS

The young, politically minded artist Liz Magic Laser has transformed the vest-pocket art space Forever & Today into a television newsroom and cast herself in the role of

anchorwoman. On Saturday and Sunday, visitors can drop in from noon to six and watch Laser rehearsing a performance from her upcoming series, "The Living Newspaper." (See page 12.)

#### CLASSICAL MUSIC LEATHERSTOCKINGS

This is not only the last week to catch the four shows running at Glimmerglass Opera; it's also a good time to enjoy the final performance offered by the Cooperstown Chamber Music Festival. It's an evening with the Juilliard String Quartet, playing Beethoven. (See page 13.)

#### MOVIES SPRING IN THE AIR

Film Society of Lincoln Center's "Orientation" presents recent movies that coincide with the themes of the Arab Spring, including "Amreeka," a drama about a Palestinian family in rural Illinois, and "Beirut Hotel," about a Lebanese singer whose French boyfriend may be a spy. Richard Peña, the Film Society's executive director, will moderate a panel discussion with the filmmakers. (See page 16.)

*Roy Haynes prepares for the Charlie Parker Jazz Festival. Photograph by Gabriele Stabile.*

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## CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK BROWN THOUGHTS

There are many reasons to be excited about the Detroit rapper Danny Brown: his nasal bungee cord of a voice; his easy way of controlling a stage; his disobedient bangs. What makes him good enough to land on the top of critics' lists, though, is



his genuine disregard for genre or regional style. On "Blueberry (Pills & Cocaine)," a recent collaboration with the British producer Darq E Freaker, Brown plays a libidinal party rapper, as base and effective a monosyllabic carnal as Waka Flocka Flame. On "Grown Up," another recent track, Brown easily summons the family-friendly storytelling of nineties rap acts like Pharcyde. On his 2011 mixtape, "XXX," Brown was at home with brutally simple bounce beats and traditional sample beds—he mostly wants to rap and keep rapping. He is a hedonist, a nerd, a stylist, a comedian, and a dedicated student of those who came before him. On August 25th, Brown appears as part of MOMA PS1's outdoor-music series, in a venue as open-ended and unpredictable as he is.

—Sasha Frere-Jones

## THE THEATRE OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Place call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

### CHAPLIN

A musical about the life of Charlie Chaplin (Rob McClure), with music and lyrics by Christopher Curtis and a book by Curtis and Thomas Meehan. Warren Carthage directs and choreographs. In previews. (Elzel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

### DETROIT

Lisa D'Amour wrote this comedy, directed by Anne Kauffman and the increasingly close relationship between two couples who are new neighbors. Amy Ryan, David Schwimmer, Darren Pettie, Sarah Sokolovic, and John Cullum star. Previews begin Aug. 24. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

### FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: ALIVE AND KICKING

The Broadway shows spoofed in the latest installment of this musical satire include "Porgy and Bess," "Evita," "Death of a Salesman," and "The Book of Mormon." Created and written by Gerard Alessandrini, who co-directs with Philip George. In previews. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

### HEARTLESS

Signature Theatre Company presents the world premiere of a new play by Sam Shepard, about the dark secrets of a Los Angeles woman. Daniel Aukin directs a cast that includes Juliette Nicholson, Jenny Bacon, Gary Cole, Betty Gilpin, and Lois Smith. In previews. Opens Aug. 27. (Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

### IF THERE IS I HAVEN'T FOUND IT YET

Michael Longhurst directs this play by Nick Payne, about the complicated life of an overweight fifteen-year-old girl. Starring Annie Funke, Brian F. O'Byrne, Michelle Johnson, and Jake Gyllenhaal, in his American stage debut. A Roundabout Theatre Company production. Previews begin Aug. 24. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

### MARY BROOME

Jonathan Bank directs the first New York revival of this 1911 comedy, written by Allan Monkhouse, in which a maid gets pregnant by her employer's son. In previews. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 866-811-4111.)

### THE TRAIN DRIVER

Signature Theatre presents the New York premiere of a play by Athol Fugard, about a conductor searching for the identities of a mother and child whom he killed in a train accident. Fugard also directs. In previews. (Pershing Square Signature Center, 480 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

## NOW PLAYING

### BULLET FOR ADOLF

A budding friendship between two Midwesterners and a sick New Yorker is complicated by the disappearance of a Second World War artifact, in this comedy written by Woody Harrelson and Frankie Hyman. Harrelson directs. (New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

### FRINGENYC

The sixteenth annual New York International Fringe Festival presents nearly two hundred comedies, dramas, musicals, one-person shows, and much more at twenty downtown venues. Highlights include "Pulp Shakespeare," "Linda Means to Wait," "Our Lady," and "The Hills Are Alive." For more information, visit fringenyc.org. (866-468-7619. Through Aug. 26.)

### HARRISON, TX: THREE PLAYS BY HORTON FOOTE

It's always good to be back in Harrison, Texas, the world of Horton Foote, populated by the lonely, the graceful, the suffering, the meddling,

and, often, by the great actors Hallie Foote, Horton's daughter, and her husband, Devon Abbot, so authentic and at home that they seem to actually live there. This trilogy of one-acts, unrelated except by setting, gives us Foote by way of Goldilocks—the first, "Blind Date," is comic but thin; the second, "The One-Armed Man," is potent but abrupt; the third, "The Midnight Caller," about social upheaval at a women's boarding house in the fifties, is poignant, funny, devastating, and just right. Under the direction of Pam MacKinnon, the actors—especially the veterans, including the wonderful Jayne Houdyshell—generally manage the delicacy of Foote's writing with aplomb, and the power of all three works only increases after the show is over. (\$95.59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

### INTO THE WOODS

The Public's Shakespeare in the Park season concludes with Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's dark fairy-tale musical, directed by Timothy Sheader, with co-direction by Liam Steel. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Delacorte, Central Park. Enter at 81st St. at Central Park W. 212-539-8750.)

### RICHARD III

Amanda Dehnert's production is part of the Public's Mobile Shakespeare Unit, which brings live theatre into prisons, homeless shelters, and other underserved venues before arriving Off Broadway. Even on Lafayette Street, it's hard to watch the Duke of Gloucester's "hateful deeds" without pondering them through the eyes of convicted criminals. The play has been stripped down to a clamorous hundred minutes, with little scenery and a helpful family tree on which Richard's victims get X'd out in blood red. The acting is strong if declaratory, with a stirring title performance by Ron Cephas Jones. Stringy and sunken-eyed, Jones stalks the tiny stage like a gila monster, dispatching everyone in his path. It's an unsettling study of remorselessness. (425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. Through Aug. 25.)

### SUMMER SHORTS 2012, SERIES B

The second series of this annual festival of short plays comprises three one-act comedies featuring neurotic homosexuals. In Paul Rudnick's "Cabin Fever," a flight attendant (Peter Bartlett) tells the story of how, during a terrorist attack, he once gathered his courage by imitating Karen Black in "Airport 1975." Sam Davis and Sean Hartley's charming "Love and Real Estate" is a mini-musical about three sisters who, upon moving to New York City, get taken around town by a handsome young man (Kevin Greene) looking for great real-estate deals for himself and his older lover. Neil LaBute's contemporary comedy "The Furies" uses old-fashioned screwball tropes to create a hilariously ridiculous situation: an elegant older man (Victor Sklezak) comes to a restaurant to tell his lover (J. Kandal) that he's dying, but the young man, utterly self-involved and paranoid, believes his lover is making up a reason to break up with him. (\$95.59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

## OUT OF TOWN

### HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

The summer's offerings include "Love's Labour's Lost," "Romeo and Juliet," and the Hitchcock parody "The 39 Steps." For more information, visit hvshakespeare.org. (Garrison, N.Y. 845-265-9575.)

### SHAKESPEARE & COMPANY

Gordon Edelstein directs "Satchmo at the Waldorf," by Terry Teachout, a one-man play about Louis Armstrong, starring John Douglas Thompson (Aug. 22-Sept. 16). For more information, visit shakespeare.org. (70 Kemble St., Lenox, Mass. 413-637-3353.)

### Also Playing

**THE BOOK OF MORMON:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **BRING IT ON:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **CLOSER THAN EVER:** York Theatre at St. Peter's, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 212-935-5820. **CLY-**



**BOURNE PARK:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. **COCK:** The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 646-223-3010. **EMPIRE:** Spiegelworld, 265 W. 45th St. 877-250-2920. **EVITA:** Marquis, Broadway at 46th St. 877-250-2929. **THE GERSHWINS' PORGY AND BESS:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 800-745-3000. **GORE VIDAL'S THE BEST MAN:** Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **NEWSIES:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 866-702-2717. **ONCE:** Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **ONE MAN, TWO GUINNESS:** Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **PETER AND THE STARCATHER:** Brooks Atkinson, 236 W. 47th St. 877-250-2929. **ROCK OF AGES:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **SILENCE! THE MUSICAL:** Elektra, 673 Eighth Ave., at 43rd St. 212-352-3101. **SISTER ACT:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200. **THE 25th ANNUAL SPIDER-MAN: TURN OFF THE DARK:** Foxwoods, 213 W. 42nd St. 877-250-2929. **WAR HORSE:** Vivian Beaumont, 150 W. 65th St. 212-239-6200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-239-6200.

## NIGHT LIFE ROCK AND POP

*Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to check in advance to confirm engagements.*

### AFRO-PUNK FESTIVAL

This annual event, showcasing what it calls "the other Black experience," returns to Brooklyn's Commodore Barry Park, with an eclectic lineup that includes the R. & B. crooner Erykah Badu, the skate-punk dirtdrums Cerebral Bally, and the lo-fi funkadelia masters Toro Y Moi. (Aug. 26-27. Nassau St. between Navy St. and N. Elliot Pl. For more information, visit [afropunk.com](http://afropunk.com).)

### BEACON THEATRE

Broadway at 74th St. (212-465-6500)—Aug. 22: Decades removed from rap, Al Green still is one of the most original and seductive voices in music. Near the height of his soul stardom, he turned increasingly to religion, becoming an ordained minister in 1976 and singing gospel music almost exclusively until the mid-eighties. In recent years, he has returned to secular music in force, having collaborated both with his seventies partner Willie Mitchell (who died in 2010) and with contemporary tastemakers like Questlove and Anthony Hamilton. At this show, Green will be accompanied by a nine-piece band with three backup singers (two of whom are his daughters) and two dancers.

### BOWERY BALLROOM

6 Delancy St. (212-533-2111)—Aug. 22: Sebadoh reunites to unleash its first collection of new material in more than a dozen years. The seasoned indie veterans have shed the lo-fi recording aesthetic that they helped popularize, instead opting for loud and clear rock sounds. In keeping with its D.I.Y. ethos, the band released the new EP, "Secret," through Bandcamp, a Web site that directs proceeds to the artists themselves. Aug. 23: The Celtic rock act Gaelic Storm fuses traditional Irish folk, world music, and breezy pop on its ninth album, "Chicken Bopper." Ever true to their happy-go-lucky appearance in the 1997 film "Titanic," where they were cast as the steeple band, these fiddlers, pipers, and whistlers make for a beer-swiggling good time.

### BOWERY ELECTRIC

327 Bowery, at 2nd St. (212-228-0228)—Aug. 22: What once was five shall now be three. A group called Sport and Play (Joanna Choy on vocals and percussion, Mike Fomatale on vocals and guitar, and Matt Lindsey on bass) has assigned itself the challenge of reconfiguring the music of Pentangle, the enigmatic English Elizabethan-psych-folk outfit from the sixties that had the enviable luxury of John Renbourn and Bert Jansch on guitars.

### CITY WINERY

155 Varick St. (212-608-0555)—Aug. 22: The indie orchestra Portland Cello Project is known for tak-

ing classical instruments into non-classical genres; the collective's most recent album, "Homage," explores hip-hop with string renditions of songs by Kanye West, Outkast, and Lil' Wayne. Aug. 24: James (Blood) Ulmer, the seventy-year-old electric guitarist from South Carolina, is best known as an avant-garde-jazz master, thanks in large part to a stint with Ornette Coleman in the seventies. But Ulmer's soul and funk roots go deep, too, and this gig fronting the Memphis Blood Blues Band features another genre-hopping guitar player, Vernon Reid. Aug. 25-26: Few have been so good for so long as Taj Mahal (another septuagenarian), a blues-and-roots evangelist still at the top of his game. Aug. 28: The free Tuesday-evening series in the lot behind the club ends with a performance by Poundcake (Teddy Thompson, Jeff Hill, and Ethan Eubanks), playing hits and misses from the fifties and sixties, with Sun Records as musical ground zero.

### GRAMERCY THEATRE

127 E. 23rd St. (800-745-3000)—Aug. 23: The singer-songwriter Charlene Kaye had an impressive debut in 2008 with the richly orchestrated pop album "Things I Will Need in the Past." To fund her second release, "Animal Love," the punky song-

shindig on Pier 84, at the end of W. 44th St. (For more information, visit [hudsonriverpark.org](http://hudsonriverpark.org).)

### LIVING ROOM

154 Ludlow St. (212-533-7237)—Aug. 28: Stevie Jackson, Belle and Sebastian's lead guitarist and one of the group's principal songwriters, celebrates the release of "(I Can't Get No) Stevie Jackson," his first solo album. The new record is a masterly display of restraint and taste, highlighted by Jackson's articulate, reverberant guitar playing.

### NEW MUSEUM

235 Bowery, at Prince St. (212-219-1222)—Aug. 24: East Coast meets West Coast in a post-punk showdown at this edition of The New Museum's monthly music showcase "Get Weird." The L.A. trio Dams simultaneously evoke the seaside and the grittiness of their home turf through dark and reverby minor-key psych-pop tunes. The Brooklynites Household perform intricate staccato guitar pop and harmonious chorus vocals with apparent effortless.

### PUBLIC ASSEMBLY

70 N. 6th St. Brooklyn (718-384-4586)—Aug. 24: The pioneering No Wave guitarist and composer Glenn Branca headlines "Yo Eskerm Ask," a two-

## TABLES FOR TWO BROOKLYN CRAB



24 Reed St., Red Hook (718-643-2722)—The haters came on early and strong for this venture's tri-level seafood shack in Red Hook. Almost immediately upon Brooklyn Crab's opening, in June, Yelp reviews collectively deemed it one of the worst restaurants in Brooklyn, mostly owing to poor service, high prices, and epic waits. It was as if New Yorkers had been hoping for so long for such a place—sure, there are lobster rolls on every corner, but what about a proper crab boil and seafood galore somewhere near the water?—that nothing could possibly live up to their fantasies. But, if you listen to the disgruntled Yelpers, you might be deterred from a rare experience: mini-golf and beer as a prelude to fresh cold oysters and perfectly steamed lobster, eaten in the open, relatively salty air, with a killer view of New York Harbor.

The owners, Jamie Vipond and Matthew Bohner—who also run the rooftop Mexican restaurant Alma—double as woodworkers, and, according to a server, built the place. The structure, reminiscent of a D.I.Y. Cape Hatteras stilt house, is impressively grand in spite of all the raw wood and cement. On the ground floor, there's that eighteen-hole mini-golf course, a beanbag toss, and a pool table next to a porpoise-and-orca mural airbrushed onto corrugated steel. The charming salty-dog second-floor bar works overtime to appease the waiting hordes, who gaze longingly at the lucky ones already seated. The food, served in metal trays and plastic baskets on picnic tables, is simple and fresh, sourced from

the Eastern seaboard. A large party should order big—the Super Cool Platter has peel-and-eat shrimp (juicy and sweet), Sewanecott oysters, from Virginia (a bit puny), or Malpeques, from Prince Edward Island (nice and big), king-crab legs (a little dry), and Maine lobster (just right). Steam pots have more of the same, but hot, with corn and potatoes. Fried Ipswich belly dums are succulent, crab cakes are the very Maryland style, the wedge salad is drenched in dressing. Get the blue crabs if you're in the mood for a project—they're a lot of work for a little payoff. (And even less when they're dusted with not enough Old Bay.) An aspirational dish of plump seared scallops with bacon-laced kale and a Hamptons vibe seems out of place, but is no less delicious for it.

The savvy staff has learned that communication is the key to a happy relationship, and one evening, a solicitous waiter divulged that a simple design flaw is the cause of those onerous waits: the kitchen is too small to keep up. So far, that hasn't stopped hipsters young and old from flooding the place, and the restaurant is already advertising a "Sunday football special," with assurance that the upper deck will be "fully enclosed and heated, with spectacular harbor views." That warm summer night, as the sky turned pink behind the Statue of Liberty to the west, a Manhattanite looked to the east and cried gleefully, "I see Ikea!" (Open daily for dinner. Entrées \$13-\$49.)

—Shauna Lyon

stress (who is as fluent in classical piano as she is in glam rock) launched a Kickstarter campaign and raised more than thirty thousand dollars from fans.

### HUDSON RIVER PARK

Aug. 25: One of last year's tightest, funkier, happiest shows was the Bo-Kays' appearance in town behind "Got to Get Back," an album of original tunes by the seasoned soul performers, its members having played on dozens of hits for Stax, Hi, and other Memphis labels. The front man was Charles (Skip) Pitts, whose wah-wah guitar defined Isaac Hayes's "Shaft." Pitts died earlier this year, but the band carries on, headlining an all-day blues-and-barbecue

day festival presented by the experimental label Fortissimo Records. Also appearing will be Neptune, an angular experimental-rock trio that began as a sculpture project and features handmade instruments made from scrap metal and found objects. Aug. 25: The festival wraps up with the drone maestro Tim Hecker and Daniel Lopatin (who releases cosmic avant-jazz music as Oneohmion Point New). Earlier this summer, the two announced that they would be joining forces to produce a collaborative album. The record will be released through Lopatin's label, Software Records, an imprint of Mexican Summer, later in the year. The live debut of their collaboration will take

place this October at the UnSound festival, in Poland. Here, each will perform separately.

#### TERRA BLUES

149 Bleecker St. (212-777-7776)—Aug. 23: The vocalist and harpist John Németh blows into town with a valise full of his two new releases, "Blues Live" and "Soul Live." Audiences at the club won't have to choose—Németh and his well-travelled band will mash it all up for you. Aug. 24: Blind Boy Paxton returns with his collection of old blues and old, old American standards, evocatively interpreted with simple singing and complicated finger-picking.

#### WARM UP

MOMA PS1, 22-25 Jackson Ave., Queens. (718-784-2084)—Aug. 25: Shining the spotlight on cutting-edge hip-hop d.j.s and producers, P.S. 1's outdoor music series, now in its fifteenth year, continues to push boundaries. Just Blaze achieved prominence in the rap world working alongside Kanye West and doing groundbreaking production work for Cam'ron and Jay-Z. Nick will be joined by the tripped-out Brooklyn d.j. Nick Catchdubs and his flamboyant and raucous Fool's Gold labelmate, the Detroit rapper Danny Brown. With the producers-remixers the Stallions and the dance-music d.j. and Vampire Weekend bassist BAIO.

#### WEBSTER HALL

125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Aug. 25: Keeping the spirit of the sixties alive, this night of throwback

#### CHARLIE PARKER JAZZ FESTIVAL

The late-August birthday of the legendary bebop saxophonist prompts an annual uptown-downtown mini-festival. This is the twentieth anniversary of the gathering, and it gets under way on Aug. 24 in Marcus Garvey Park, in Harlem, with the world premiere of the program "Bird with Strings," featuring the composer and violinist Miguel Atwood-Ferguson. The following day, also in Marcus Garvey Park, the drummer Roy Haynes, the vocalist Rene Marie, and others lead the charge. The festival ends in Tompkins Square Park, in the East Village, on Aug. 26, with a bill that includes Ernestine Anderson. (For more information, visit [www.cityparksfoundation.org](http://www.cityparksfoundation.org).)

#### CORNELIA STREET CAFÉ

29 Cornelia St. (212-989-9319)—Aug. 23: The spoken-word artist Kirpal Gordon pays tribute to the double-headed font of genius that was the team of Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. His instrumental cohorts include the baritone saxophonist Claire Daly and the saxophonist Frank Perowsky.

#### DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA

Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Aug. 27: Joe Altman, an amiable new pianist on the scene, receives the kind of support bestowed on only the very fortunate, in the form of the soulful tenor saxophonist Houston Person.

## ART

### MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

#### METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—"Tomas Saraceno: Cloud City." Through Nov. 4. ♦ "Belini, Titian, and Lotto: North Italian Paintings from the Accademia Carrara, Bergamo." Through Sept. 3. ♦ "Naked Before the Camera." Through Sept. 9. ♦ "Ellsworth Kelly: Plants." Through Sept. 3. ♦ "Chinese Gardens: Palace Pavilions, Scholars' Studios, Rustic Retreats." Through Jan. 6. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

#### MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—"Alighiero Boetti: Game Plan." Through Oct. 1. ♦ "Ecstatic Alphabets/Heaps of Language." Through Aug. 27. ♦ "Taryn Simon: A Living Man Declared Dead and Other Chapters." Through Sept. 3. ♦ "Century of the Child: Growing by Design, 1900-2000." You might come just for the toys: the Scottish illustrator Jessie King's 1912 dollhouse, the Uruguayan artist Joaquin Torres-Garcia's wooden figures and tropical birds from the early twenties, the Czech designer Libuse Niklova's inflatable plastic giraffe from 1971. But you'd be cheating yourself—this ambitious show



The Bo-Keys bring their burnished Memphis sound to Pier 84, for Hudson River Park's "Blues BBQ," a day of food and music.

music is headlined by the psych-rock sounds of the Brian Jonestown Massacre. With the Minneapolis band Magic Castles, who rock pleasantly and frantically, like early Velvet Underground.

## JAZZ AND STANDARDS

#### BIRDLAND

315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Aug. 21-25: The pianist and composer Richie Beirach, a veteran player whose European sojourns keep him off the local radar for extended stretches, is always worth attending to on his visits home.

#### BLUE NOTE

131 W. 3rd St. (212-475-8592)—Aug. 21-23: A celebration of the influential tenor saxophonist Michael Brecker, who died in 2007, includes the increasingly influential saxophonist Ravi Coltrane and Jeff (Tain) Watts, a drummer of unrelenting passion and intensity. Aug. 24-26: Riding on the critical acclaim of his new album, "Christian Aunde Aduah," the trumpeter Christian Scott charts a course that honors his New Orleans roots from the vivid perspective of contemporary New York.

#### IRIDIUM

1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Aug. 23-26: Pat Martino, a revered guitarist whose roots extend back to the funky jazz combos of the early sixties and push forward through post-bop exploration, has yet to rest on his laurels.

#### JAZZ STANDARD

116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Aug. 23-26: The brass man and bandleader Steven Bernstein and the New Orleans-based pianist and vocalist Henry Butler are kindred, historically minded yet playfully in-the-moment spirits. Here, they investigate the bedrock of American music, the blues.

#### THE KITANO NEW YORK

66 Park Ave., at 38th St. (212-885-7119)—Aug. 24-25: The Frank Kimbrough trio. One of the keen-minded players who came of age in the nineties, balancing the imperatives of tradition and innovation, Kimbrough remains a shrewd pianist not to be underestimated or overlooked.

#### VILLAGE VANGUARD

178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Aug. 21-26: Ethan Iverson, the pianist from the Bad Plus, keeps his straight-jazz chops in fighting shape by stretching out with the superb veteran drummer Albert (Tootie) Heath. The bassist Ben Street, a complementary spirit, completes the trio.

extends well beyond playthings to consider psychology, cultural differences, and the ways in which the young are used to promote ideologies. Its international scope covers a range of avant-garde design for children by mid-century marquee names, including Herbert Bayer's modular Bauhaus playset, Gio Ponti's pint-size glass desk, children's chairs by Harry Bertorio and Charles and Ray Eames. Engraving ingenious inventions (the Skipper Racer, the Slinky) are balanced by the creations of children themselves: drawings of bomber airplanes made during the Spanish Civil War, a football recently fashioned from a bread bag by a boy in South Africa. Through Nov. 5. ♦ "Quay Brothers: On Deciphering the Pharmacist's Prescription for Lip-Reading Puppets." Through Jan. 7. ♦ "Eyes Closed/Eyes Open: Recent Acquisitions in Drawings." Through Jan. 7. ♦ "Projects 98: Slavs and Tatars." Through Dec. 10. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

#### MOMA PS1

22-25 Jackson Ave., Queens (718-784-2084)—"Lara Favaretto: Just Knocked Out." Through Sept. 10. ♦ "Esther Klis—Better Energy." Through Sept. 17. ♦ "Solo Projects by Rey Akdogan, Edgardo Aragón, Ilya Karilampi, and Caitlin Krogg." Through Sept. 17. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

JORGE ARRAVAL

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK  
ONE LUCKY GUY



Guy de Maupassant has been blessed in the directors who have transposed his work to the cinema, but he merits his good fortune; something in Maupassant's vision of the world—the impulsive motion of heart and loins alike, tirelessly tracked by his restive prose—comes very close to the habits of a roving camera. Godard borrowed from him for “Masculine Feminine,” though the swag was heavily disguised; Max Ophüls strung together three tales for “Le Plaisir”; and, in the loveliest homage, Jean Renoir adapted “A Day in the Country” (1936), which screens at Film Forum on August 23rd. The film runs just under forty minutes, and the story could not be simpler: town dwellers go for a picnic on the river, and two women are seduced. One of them never forgets. The imagery shimmers with references to the director's father, who used to paint in the same region, and the result brims with languor and pagan zest—note the cad who pretends to play panpipe, like a satyr. The ending is a tragedy in miniature, but it is flicked away, like a cigarette, and life drifts on.

—Anthony Lane

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3587)—“Rineke Djikstra: A Retrospective.” Through Oct. 3. ♦ “Art of Another Kind: International Abstraction and the Guggenheim, 1949-1960.” Through Sept. 12. (Open Fridays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Saturday evenings until 7:45.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3600)—“Yayoi Kusama.” Through Sept. 30. ♦ “Sharon Hayes: There's So Much I Want to Say to You.” Through Sept. 9. ♦ “Oskar Fischinger: Space Light Art—A Film Environment.” Through Oct. 28. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM

200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—“Jean-Michel Othoniel: My Way.” Through Dec. 2. ♦ “Playing House.” Through Aug. 26. ♦ “Ulrike Müller: Herstory Inventory.” Through Sept. 9. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 10.)

CENTRAL PARK W. AT 79th ST.

—“Creatures of Light: Nature's Bioluminescence.” Through Jan. 6. ♦ “Spiders Alive!” Through Dec. 2. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

BRONX MUSEUM OF THE ARTS

1040 Grand Concourse (718-681-6000)—“Urban Archives: The Rituals of Chaos.” Through Jan. 16. ♦ “Revolution Not Televised.” Through Oct. 17. (Open Thursdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

1133 Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—“Gordon Parks: 100 Years.” Through Jan. 6. ♦ “Christer Strömholm: Les Amies de Place Blanche.” The influential Swedish photographer, who died in 2002 and never had an American museum show in his lifetime, arrives posthumously with this subversively seductive exhibition of black-and-white pictures taken in Paris in the late nineteen-fifties and sixties. His subjects are a group of pretty, coquettish transsexuals who look convincingly femme, even undressed. Nana, Jacky, Cobra, Caprice, and their friends yamp for the camera like pros, but Strömholm, clearly smitten, still manages to suggest the fraught complications of their sisterly camaraderie. Like Ed van der Elsen's earlier “Love on the Left Bank,” this is a romantic view of a Parisian demimonde that was not always so charming. Here, it looks like Brassai filtered through Nan Goldin—an equation that's pretty hard to resist. Through Sept. 2. ♦ “President in Petticoats! Civil War Propaganda in Photographs.” Through Sept. 2. ♦ “Weegee: Murder Is My Business.” Through Sept. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

JEWISH MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—“Eduard Vuillard: A Painter and His Muses, 1890-1940.” Through Sept. 23. ♦ “Sanford Biggers and Jennifer Zackin: A Small World.” Through Oct. 14. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 5:45, Thursdays, 11 to 8, and Fridays, 11 to 4.)

MORGAN LIBRARY & MUSEUM

225 Madison Ave. at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—“Robert Wilson/Philip Glass: Einstein on the Beach.” Through Nov. 4. ♦ “Josef Albers in America: Painting on Paper.” Through Oct. 14. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

MUSEO DEL BARRIO

Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (212-831-7272)—“Caribbean: Crossroads of the World.” Through Jan. 6. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6, and Sundays, 1 to 5.)

MUSEUM OF BIBLICAL ART

Broadway at 61st St. (212-408-1500)—“The Adoration of the Magi by Bartolo di Fredi: A Masterpiece Reconstructed.” Through Sept. 9. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

MUSEUM OF CHINESE IN AMERICA

215 Centre St. (212-619-4785)—“America Through a Chinese Lens.” Through Sept. 10. (Open Mondays and Fridays, 11 to 5, Thursdays, 11 to 9, and weekends, 10 to 5.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. (212-534-1672)—“London Street Photography.” Through Dec. 12. ♦ “City Scenes: New York Street Photography.” Through Dec. 12. ♦ “Capital of Capital: New York's Banks and the Creation of a Global Economy.” Through Oct. 21. (Open daily, 10 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8:30.)

NATIONAL ACADEMY MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-369-4880)—“Mary Cassatt: Graphic Artist.” Through Aug. 26. ♦ “May Stevens: The Big Daddy Series.” Through Aug. 26. ♦ “From Protest to Process: Recent Gifts by Women Academicians.” Through Aug. 26. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NEUE GALERIE

1048 Fifth Ave. at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—“Gustav Klimt: 150th Anniversary Celebration.” Through Aug. 27. ♦ “Heinrich Kuehn and His American Circle: Alfred Stieglitz and Edward Steichen.” Through Aug. 27. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

NEW MUSEUM

235 Bowery, at Prince St. (212-219-1222)—“Ghosts in the Machine.” Through Sept. 20. ♦ “Pictures from the Moon: Artists' Holograms 1969-2008.” Through Sept. 30. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

Bronx River Parkway at Fordham Rd., the Bronx (718-817-8700)—“Monet's Garden.” Through May 18. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6.)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (917-275-6975)—“Lunch Hour NYC.” Through Feb. 17. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 10 to 8, and Sundays, 1 to 5.)

QUEENS MUSEUM OF ART

Flushing Meadows-Corona Park (718-592-9700)—“Caribbean: Crossroads of the World.” Through Jan. 6. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, noon to 5.)

SOUTH STREET SEAPORT MUSEUM

12 Fulton St. at Water St. (212-748-8600)—“Compass: Folk Art in Four Directions.” Through Oct. 7. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—“Caribbean: Crossroads of the World.” Through Oct. 21. ♦ “2011-2012 Artists in Residence: Njideka Akunyili, Meloko Mokosi, and Xavier Simmons.” Through Oct. 12. (Open Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

BRUCE NAUMAN

New York gets its first look at a major work by the artist. “One Hundred Fish Fountain” (2005) is a huge installation of suspended life-size bronze fish riddled with holes, from which water spews crazily for several minutes, then dribbles and, finally, drips (loudly, with amplification). Then it falls silent, whereupon the piscine swarm appears mirrored in the black-bottomed pool below. The tacit joke is simple—reversing the nouns in the phrase “fish out of water.” But the effect is complex, and, inundating the senses, profound. It registers musically, unfolding in time. You will be glad if you linger for the full cycle. Through Aug. 31. (Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 212-744-2313.)

Short List

JAMES LEE BYARS: Werner, 4 E. 77th St. 212-988-1623. Through Aug. 31. ANNETTE MESSAGER: Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160. Through Aug. 24. “BULLETIN BOARDS”: Venus Over Manhattan, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 212-980-0700. Through Aug. 24. “JANET CARDIFF AND GEORGE BURES MILLER: THE MUR-

**DER OF CROWS** Park Avenue Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. 212-933-5812. Through Sept. 9.

## GALLERIES—CHELSEA

### JULIKA RUDELIS

The aspirations of young men are the focus of two absorbing videos by the artist, who divides her time between Brooklyn and Amsterdam. What do they aspire to? Power, both political and sexual. In "Rites of Passage," made in 2008, political interns in Washington, D.C., are seen being interviewed by older men. In "Rituals," completed this year, androgynous-looking youths pose seductively for Rudelis on the streets of Beijing, as if auditioning for a romantic lead in a movie. The subjects of these two works may be worlds apart, but they all exude a heartbeating combination of arrogance and vulnerability. Through Sept. 8. (Koenig, 545 W. 23rd St. 212-334-9255.)

### Short List

**SELYNE AXELL:** Broadway 1602, at 1181 Broadway, at 28th St. 212-481-0362. Through Aug. 25.  
**"THE SKIN WE'RE IN":** Milo, 245 Tenth Ave., at 24th St. 212-414-0370. Through Aug. 31.  
**"SUMMER SELECTIONS":** Danziger, 527 W. 23rd St. 212-629-6778. Through Aug. 30.

## GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

### DAVID KORTY

Taking Vancouver's skyline as his muse, the Los Angeles-based painter combines color, drawing, and painting in delicate, Bauhaus-inflected depictions of skyscrapers that double as formalist meditations on the early-twentieth-century avant-garde's love affair with the grid. Korty's palette is neutral, invigorated by washes of blue and ochre and Dada-esque touches, like the inclusion of letters whose forms evoke manual typewriters. Best in show (also the largest, at nearly six by eight feet): "Structure with Wind," which suggests a masterpiece by way of Malevich. Through Aug. 23. (Kimmerly, 50 White St. 212-226-0070.)

### "GIFTED AND TALENTED"

The performance artist Clifford Owens tapped four young artists who share his interests in the body, endurance, and identity politics for this intense group show. In her video "Close Is Awesome," Tameka Norris takes several humiliating tumbles after the rug is literally pulled out from under her. Tom Chung's self-portraits—in which he strikes dramatic poses behind Ikea arrangements and dream catchers—blend satire and mysticism. A physically charged formalism emerges in works by Elán Jurado, who is seen in a video being shot at close range with a paint gun until he collapses, and by Ali Kheradvar, who photographs a woman's pubic hair camouflaged by triangles of colorful dye, a feminist update of a fig leaf. The exhibition closes on Sept. 6; a day of performances by the participants is scheduled for Sept. 8. (Third Streaming, 10 Greene St. 646-370-3877.)

### "WOMEN"

Although the subjects of this show (including Collette, Callas, Chanel, and Sontag) are often more interesting than the photographers who shot them, there's plenty of high-profile talent on both sides of the lens. Three images on the opening wall set the tone: Patti Smith, giggling like a mischievous child, in a portrait by Mary Ellen Mark and a comically imperious Diana Vreeland (by Harry Benson) bracket Barbara Morgan's elegant, spare picture of Martha Graham in performance. Elsewhere, Ron Gallella catches Jackie O. striding across the street, Herb Ritts freezes a leaping Jackie Joyner-Kersey in mid-air, and Alfred Eisenstaedt rounds up Marlene Dietrich, Anna May Wong, and Lenni Ruesenstahl for a memorable party picture. Through Aug. 24. (Staley-Weiss, 360 Broadway, at Prince St. 212-966-6223.)

### Short List

**LIZ MAGIC LASER:** Forever & Today, 141 Division St. 646-455-1744. Open Aug. 25-26. **JESSICA**

**BATH:** Hanley, 136 Watts St. 646-918-6824. Through Aug. 31. **"COMMON GROUND":** Public Art Fund at City Hall Park, Broadway between Chambers St. and Park Row. 212-223-7800. Through Nov. 30.

## DANCE

### NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL FRINGE FESTIVAL

In the final week of this year's festival, the dance offerings include "Contrasts," in which two mimes from Romania perform a parody of ballet and wear tap shoes for a Mars-Venus look at relations between the sexes; Neja Yarkin's "Oasis," a Middle Eastern multimedia fantasy that touches on veiling, torture, and collapsing dualities; and "Saharava," a Tarot-card dance. On the more traditional side, there's "Simplemente Flamenco" and Malini Srivastava's collection of bhārata-nāṭyam transformations, "Being Becoming." Visit [www.fringenyc.org](http://www.fringenyc.org) for full schedule. (Various locations. 866-468-7619.)

### "DIDO AND AENEAS" / MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL

Despite their common origins in the courts of Europe, opera and dance can be uncomfortable bedfellows. In July, the Paris Opera Ballet revealed Pina Bausch's approach to the marriage of the two forms in "Orpheus and Eurydice"; this month, Mark Morris's "Dido and Aeneas," from 1989, showcases the tension. Here, the dancers take center stage, with the singers out of sight. Morris's original interpretation of Purcell's tale of longing and abandonment was conceived as a one-man show, in which he performed both the role of Dido and that of her nemesis, a bewitching sorcerer. Eventually he added a chorus of dancers, who comment on the action like a frieze come to life. More recently, the roles of Dido and Sorcerer have been performed by two dancers of different sexes; this time, however, the intense, amazonian Amber Star Merkins will take on both the tragic queen and her cruel tormentor. The mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe, too, will sing both roles. Morris, who has recently taken up conducting, leads the orchestra. (Rose Theatre, 60th St. at Broadway. 212-721-6500. Aug. 22-24 at 8 and Aug. 25 at 5.)

### CATCH 52

In a series of contemporary performance sketches, the pieces are often little more than sketches, but they're short and lively and of the moment. The participants range from unknowns to downtown big shots (Adrienne Truscott and Cynthia Hopkins for this iteration, No. 52), and the cheap ticket buys you barbecue on the roof. (The Bushwick Starr, 207 Starr St., Brooklyn. 718-306-2370. Aug. 25 at 7.)

### "BALLET IN CINEMA" / "LA SOURCE"

The original version of "La Source," created by Arthur Saint-Léon for the Paris Opera Ballet in 1866, was soon forgotten, despite its pretty score by Léo Delibes and Ludwig Minkus. Elements survived in subsequent versions in Russia, and in Balanchine's effervescent plotless suite from 1968. Last year, the Paris Opera staged a reimagined version, conceived by the homegrown ballet master Jean-Guillaume Bart. Bart simplified the plot while keeping its exotic trappings, including a mountain spring in the Caucasus and an Oriental court complete with odalisques. The story is simple: a nymph aids a young hunter to win the love of a beautiful woman promised to a rich man, at the price of her own life. The production's storybook sets are by Eric Ruf; the sumptuous costumes are by Christine Lacroix. The closing of the November 4 performance—with Ludmila Pajlerova as the nymph—is equally deluxe. See [balletcinema.com](http://balletcinema.com) for locations nationwide. (Big Cinema, 239 E. 59th St. 212-371-6682. Aug. 26 at 11 A.M.)

## OUT OF TOWN

### JACOB'S PILLOW

The Joffrey Ballet was once one of the top three companies in New York, but since it decamped to Chicago, in 1995, East Coast appearances have been rare. For this visit to the Tod Shaw Theatre, the strong technique of the current crop of dancers is handsomely displayed in Yuri Possokhov's "Bella," a

quasi-pastorale to Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto. The ensemble portions of Edward Lang's sometimes overheard "Age of Innocence" also impress, and a premiere by Stanton Welch completes the program of commissioned work. ♦ "Fraulein Maria," Doug Elkins's crafty, funny, stylistically eclectic take on "The Sound of Music," finishes a multi-year tour with a return to the Doris Duke Theatre, closing out the Pillow's eightieth-anniversary season. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. Aug. 22-26.)

## CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERTS IN TOWN

### METROPOLITAN OPERA

#### SUMMER HD FESTIVAL

In what is becoming an end-of-summer Peter Gelb tradition, the Met presents a series of free broadcasts of the HD films it sends to movie theatres, on a jumbo screen very close to home—Lincoln Center Plaza. Seating is first come, first served. Aug. 25 at 7:30: "The Enchanted Island," featuring such singers as Lisette Oropesa, Joyce DiDonato, David Daniels, and Plácido Domingo; and Giovanni Christie conducts. ♦ Aug. 26 at 7:30: "Don Giovanni," with a cast that includes Mariusz Kwiecien, Luca Pisaroni, and Barbara Frittolo Fabio Luisi. ♦ Aug. 27 at 8: Bellini's "La Sonnambula," seen in Mary Zimmerman's quirky production but with the compensatory voices of Natalie Dessay and Juan Diego Flórez, Evelino Pidó. ♦ Aug. 28 at 7:45: Who knows—maybe Philip Glass's hypnotic treatment of the life of Gandhi, "Satyagraha," will be even more amazing when viewed under the stars. The loaded production is by Phelim McDermott and Julian Crouch, featuring Richard Croft as Gandhi. (Lincoln Center Plaza. No tickets required. Through Sept. 3.)

### MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL

The summer series, as vital as ever, enters its last week. Aug. 21-22 at 8: The pianist Stephen Hough, always welcome at Lincoln Center, appears with the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra and an admired guest conductor, Andrew Manze, in a program featuring Mendelssohn's Concerto No. 1 in G Minor in addition to Bach's Third Orchestral Suite (in Mendelssohn's pathbreaking edition) and Mozart's "Jupiter" (Avery Fisher Hall). ♦ Aug. 22-24 at 8 and Aug. 25 at 5: An event—Mark Morris not only choreographs the Mark Morris Dance Group but conducts the MMDG Music Ensemble and the Trinity Choir in his production of Purcell's immortal opera "Dido and Aeneas." The mythic couple is portrayed by the beloved mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe and the baritone Joshua Jeremiah. (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St.) ♦ Aug. 24-25 at 8: Louis Langrée and the festival orchestra offer their grand finale program—Mozart's Clarinet Concerto and Beethoven's understated yet electrified Mass in C Major. They are joined by several outstanding young soloists: the clarinetist Martin Fröst and the singers Lyvia Claire, Sasha Cooke, Paul Appleby, and Matthew Rose, as well as the Concert Chorus of New York. (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ Aug. 24 at 10:30: In the last of the festival's inviting nightcap events, Fröst hangs on after his first concert to join the soprano Lisette Oropesa and the pianist Shai Wosner in a program of music by Schubert ("The Shepherd on the Rock") and Brahms (the Sonata No. 1 in F Minor for Clarinet and Piano and a selection of "Hungarian Dances"). (Kimmel Performance.)

### DELL'ARTE OPERA ENSEMBLE

It seems that young and scrappy opera companies are bursting out all over Gotham. One is this ambitious group, directed by Christopher Fecetau, which is presenting two favorite French operas in repertory, performed by emerging singers. Aug. 23 and Aug. 25 at 8: "Carmen." ♦ Aug. 24 and Aug. 26 at 3: Poulenc's "Dialogues of the Carmelites." (E 13th Street Theatre, 136 E. 13th St. [brownpapertickets.com](http://brownpapertickets.com).)

### LOCRIAN CHAMBER PLAYERS

In honor of the upcoming centenary of John Cage, this valuable group, which performs only music less than ten years old, gamely offers a selection of works for an instrument that Cage virtually invented, the prepared piano; the composers include Christian Carey, James Bunch, Georg Friedrich Haas ("De



Terrae Fine"), David Macdonald, and the resourceful Caleb Burhans. Their excellent performers include the violinist Miranda Cuckson and, on the instrument in question, David Broome, (10th Floor Performance Space, Riverside Church, 10th Claremont Ave. No tickets required. Aug. 24 at 8.)

#### BARGEMUSIC: ST. PETERSBURG STRING QUARTET

The weekend at the floating chamber-music series is dominated by this intense Russian ensemble, which performs not only repertory quartets by Schubert (No. 13 in A Minor) and Ravel but a rarity by Tchaikovsky (an early, unfinished work from 1865). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. bargemusic.org. Aug. 25 at 8 and Aug. 26 at 2.)

#### TAKA KIGAWA: "THE ART OF FUGUE"

Kigawa, a pianist who has carved a niche in the city's musical life as a formidable advocate for modernist masterpieces, takes a backward glance at Bach's contrapuntal *opus ultimum* in a performance at (Le) Poisson Rouge. (158 Bleecker St. lprny.com. Aug. 27 at 8.)

## OUT OF TOWN

### TANGLEWOOD

Aug. 22 at 8: The eminent musicians of the Boston Symphony Chamber Players start off the final week of classical music at the festival, joined by the soprano Karina Gauvin (making her Tanglewood debut), in a concert of works by Lukas Foss, J. S.

Bach, the classical season at Tanglewood comes to a close with the traditional performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. De Burgos returns to the podium, with an exceptional group of vocal soloists—Leah Crocetto, Meredith Arwady, Frank Lopardo, and John Relyea—joined by the renowned Tanglewood Festival Chorus. The concert begins with the premiere of a new choral work by John Harbison. (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200.)

### GLIMMERGLASS FESTIVAL

Aug. 23 at 7:30: The leading summer opera company of the Northeast gives listeners one more chance to take in its impressive lineup of shows. The festival has made its first plunge into the French Baroque with a lavish production of Lully's "Armide," a supernatural *tragédie en musique* set against the backdrop of Christian-Muslim conflict in the Holy Land. Marshall Pynkoski's staging features the singers Peggy Kriha Dye, Colin Ainsworth, João Fernandes, and Curtis Sullivan, along with a full corps de ballet; David Fallis conducts. ♦ Aug. 24 at 7:30: Francesca Zambello, the festival's adventurous general director, has made it her mission to stage great American musicals in the Alice Busch Theatre, heard in their original, unamplified state. "The Music Man," directed and choreographed by Marcia Milgrom Dodge, features a cast headed by the estimable Dwayne Croft (a Cooperstown native) and Elizabeth Futrell; John DeMaio. ♦ Aug. 25 at 13: Kurt Weill devoted great care to his last completed show, "Lost in the Stars" (1949), a "musical tragedy" inspired by Alan Paton's novel "Cry, the Beloved Country," a vivid protest against the racist structure of South African society. The magnetic

row, offering outstanding performers in classic repertory. The season ends grandly, with a concert by none other than the Juilliard String Quartet. It plays what few other groups can play as well—late Beethoven, specifically the Quartets in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 131, and in A Minor, Op. 132. (Farmers' Museum, Cooperstown, N.Y. Aug. 24 at 7:30.)

### MAVERICK CONCERTS

The sounds of two pianos will resonate through the Maverick's serene woodland hall this weekend. The first concert is offered by two outstanding jazz artists, the husband-and-wife team of Bill Charlap and Renee Rosnes; the second by two dazzling classical pianists, Andrew Russo and Frederic Chiu, who perform a febrile program of masterpiece transcriptions by Debussy ("Nocturnes" and "Prélude to the Afternoon of a Faun"), Gershwin ("An American in Paris"), and Ravel in addition to Philip Glass's Four Movements for Two Pianos. (Woodstock, N.Y. maverickconcerts.org. Aug. 25 at 6:30 and Aug. 26 at 4.)

### WINDHAM CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Two engaging vocal artists, the soprano Nancy Allen Lundy and the baritone Philip Clutier, are accompanied by the pianist Stephen Gosling in a program offering songs and arias by Mozart, Puccini, Gershwin, and other names from both opera and Broadway. (Windham, N.Y. windhammusic.com. Aug. 25 at 8.)

### MUSIC MOUNTAIN

Connecticut's summer shrine to the string quartet goes big this weekend, with an all-Beethoven program performed by the illustrious Juilliard String Quartet—the Quartets in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 131,



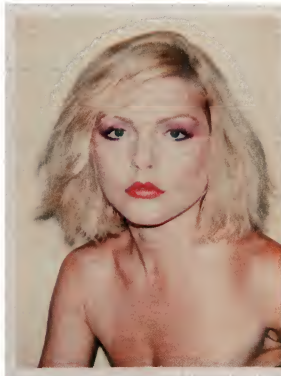
"Dolly Parton" (1985) and "Debbie Harry" (1980), by Andy Warhol, in "Summer Selections," at the Danziger gallery.

Bach (the Cantata No. 209, "Non sa che sia dolore"), Hindemith, Bruch ("Kol Nidrei"), and Mozart (the Divertimento in E-Flat Major, K. 289). ♦ Aug. 25 at 8:30: With James Levine out of the picture, opera has not featured prominently in this summer's season. A final flash of vocal glamour comes just in time, however, courtesy of the conductor Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, leading a work he knows intimately—Failla's "La Vida Breve," full of flamenco themes and fiery emotions. The cast features such singers as Nancy Fabiola Herrera and Vincente Om-buena as well as the flamenco dancer Núria Pomares Rojas. Albéniz's "Suite Española," arranged by de Burgos, begins the evening. ♦ Aug. 26 at 2:30:

Met bass-baritone Eric Owens, this summer's artist-in-residence, heads the cast, joined by the tenor Sean Panikkar and the actor Wynn Harmon; DeMaio. ♦ Aug. 25 at 8: The artistry of Owens (here in the role of Amonasro) anchors another of the festival's productions—"Aida," seen in a staging by Zambello herself. Michelle Johnson, Noah Stewart, and Daveda Karanas sing the roles of Aida, Radamès, and Amneris, respectively; Nader Abbassi. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255. These are the final performances.)

### COOPERSTOWN CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

While Cooperstown's Glimmerglass Festival has been mounting impressive opera productions all summer, this much smaller series has been hoeing its own



and in A Minor, Op. 132. (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. Aug. 26 at 3.)

### SALOME CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

This fast-rising conductorless chamber orchestra, fronted by the stunningly talented young violist David Aaron Carpenter, is poised to be the next big presence in the East End classical scene. Its first concert, a joint effort with the classical-pop superstar Rufus Wainwright, offers not only performances of Vivaldi's "The Four Seasons" and Piazzolla's "Four Seasons of Buenos Aires" but also Wainwright's vocal renditions of Berlioz's "Les Nuits d'Été" and of his own glamorous songs. (Guild Hall, East Hampton, N.Y. salomechamber.org. Aug. 26 at 8.)

## MOVIES OPENING

### HIT & RUN

Dax Shepard wrote, co-directed (with David Palmer), and stars in this comedy, as a shady character who leaves a witness-protection program to drive his fiancée (Kristen Bell) to California. Opening Aug. 22. (In wide release.)

### LITTLE WHITE LIES

A drama, directed by Guillaume Canet, about a group of lifelong friends, now middle-aged, who reunite after the death of a member of the group. Starring François Cluzet, Marion Cotillard, and

## TV NOTES DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION

The sixth episode of "Bunheads," a new series on ABC Family, ended with an odd sequence worth rewinding. Three teen ballerinas stared straight into the camera—eyelids smudged, beatnik-style—then began to wriggle and stomp and pose. But while their dance was angry, the music was playful: "Istanbul (Not Constantinople)," as covered by They Might Be Giants.

According to the show's creator, Amy Sherman-Palladino, the performance was a stopgap when an episode fell a few minutes short. Yet that improvisational vamp felt just right for "Bunheads," which has a breezy, loose-limbed unpredictability rare for television. Set around a dance studio in a small town, the series feels as unstructured as HBO's "Treme" and as winsome as "Parks and Recreation," with the inside-theatre vibe that "Smash" so sadly lacks. But, really, it is a creature unlike any other, a show that puts the sweet and generous into "sui generis."

On the surface, the plot replicates Sherman-Palladino's earlier hit, "Gilmore Girls"; both feature a chatterbox heroine sparring with a matron. But, while "Gilmore Girls" was clever and cloying, "Bunheads" is full-on strange, willing to toss premises out the window like confetti. In the pilot, a stage-door Johnny (Alan Ruck) proposed to a Vegas showgirl named Michelle (the Broadway star Sutton Foster). When she accepted, the series seemed like it would be a record of their romance,

mark who finds love in Thailand. In Danish, English, and Thai. Opening Aug. 22. (Film Forum.)

## NOW PLAYING

### THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

Does film criticism become redundant when a movie reviews itself in its own title? Or should we take that preemptive assessment as a challenge? Certainly, there are things that amaze in Marc Webb's addition to the comic-book franchise: the scene, for instance, where Peter Parker (Andrew Garfield), freshly enhanced with arachnid powers, destroys the inside of a subway car without



until he died in a car crash, leaving her a widow. For almost a dozen episodes, the series has continued to duck easy definition, weaving through book groups, teen crushes, movie nights, eccentric hooligans, and perhaps one too many home repairs, fuelled by Foster's spicy charisma. A recent episode added three new characters, all delightful, while other key figures seem to have vanished from sight.

Even more than those of screwball auteurs like Shonda Rhimes and Aaron Sorkin, Sherman-Palladino's shows are all about the dialogue, which is delivered at mach speed, studded with pop-culture references. A teen-ager orders a Temple Grandin cocktail. An ex-actor complains that he's tried out for all the "Law & Order" franchises—"The mother ship, SVU, Criminal Intent, Parental Neglect, Special Weird Guy Unit." "Fame costs!" Michelle shouts at some deadbeat parents. "And right here is where you start paying—in money! I know you thought I was going to say sweat, but we don't need sweat, we need money."

With its fizz of manic artificiality, "Bunheads" is an acquired taste: it's like an experimental cocktail garnished with ham and three thousand rum-soaked cherries. But for a hot August evening, it's my current drink of choice.

—Emily Nussbaum

### BEASTS OF THE SOUTHERN WILD

Starkly fresh and powerful. In the Gulf of Mexico, on the "wrong side of the levee," an ethnically mixed community of raffish survivors live in rickshaws and cling to a damp bit of turf that they affectionately call the Barhtub. The six-year-old heroine, Hushpuppy, played by an astonishing local schoolchild, Quvenzhané Wallis, has an exuberant, vertical thatch of hair and a small mouth that expresses both amusement and the fiercest determination. Hushpuppy's father, Wink, played by Dwight Henry, another local non-actor—a baker, with an acetylene voice—is drinking hard, fighting against illness. The two regard each other warmly, furiously, like characters in a Faulkner novel trapped in each other's compulsions and needs. As eco-disaster threatens, Hushpuppy sees ice fields melting; she has a vision of frozen prehistoric beasts breaking free and menacing her mucky habitat. The young director, Benh Zeitlin, launches the fantastic from an initial mode of crowded poetic realism; from the middle of the movie to the end, reality and fantasy flow into each other seamlessly. The moods hang together, and much of the picture is savagely happy and wild. Based on a play by Lucy Alibar, who wrote the screenplay with Zeitlin. —David Denby (7/23/12) (In wide release.)

### THE BOURNE LEGACY

The running man returns—not Jason Bourne but a new character, Aaron Cross (Jeremy Renner), another hard-ass special-ops agent who defies his superiors and keeps on moving when they try to eliminate him, racing from continent to continent and across shantytown rooftops, through crowded marketplaces, down alleyways. Matt Damon, who played Bourne, was lean in the role, but Renner's strong torso is slightly rounded. He looks like a shotgun shell, well-padded and deadly. He's physically very capable, but we don't feel anything when we look at his face. In any case, Guy, who worked as a screenwriter on all three of the earlier "Bourne" films, directs this time, in a more settled style than that of Paul Greengrass, who generated the continuous motion of the last two entries. Yet the movie—which, like the prior installments, depends more on realism (gravity, not plexus) than fantasy—is dynamic enough, with a few classic sequences. With Edward Norton and Stacy Keach, as ruthless military-intelligence types, and Rachel Weisz, as the research doctor who becomes Cross's accomplice. —D.D. (8/13 & 20/12) (In wide release.)

### THE DUMB AND DUMBERER

This mixed bag of a comedy lampoons the political process by means of a Dumb (Zach Galifianakis) and Dumber (Will Ferrell) premise. As directed by Jay Roach, it takes easy shots at the insincerity of populist messaging—the dueling candidates are depicted as mere puppets of bigger interests (thinly veiled Koch-brothers knockoffs, played very well by John Lithgow and Dan Aykroyd). But despite the obviousness of its political points, the film has a scattershot, breezy appeal. Galifianakis plays his emasculated tabula-rasa character with a winningly sympathetic streak, and Ferrell's cranky-offish performance, though familiar, is appropriately anarchic. Despite some funny bits, the movie ultimately undercuts its laughs with its rampant cynicism. —Bruce Diones (In wide release.)

### THE DARK KNIGHT RISES

After the events of July 20 in Aurora, Colorado, Christopher Nolan's new film can never be seen in quite the same way. Unjustly or otherwise, its fictional mayhem will always be tinged, or tainted, with thoughts of the genuine suffering that was borne that night. In the face of impassioned arguments—over gun control, the effect of screen violence, and the possible mimicking of comic-book villains—any idea of simple fun has been drained away. But how much fun was the movie in the first place? The story is dense, overlong, and studded with references that will make sense only to those intimate with Nolan's previous excursions into Batmanland. This time, Bruce Wayne (Christian Bale), dragged from a wistful retirement, takes on a brute named Bane (Tom Hardy), who is masked and barely comprehensible. Running alongside this battle is the tale of Selina Kyle (Anne Hathaway), a jewel thief with feline overtones, and the emergence of Blake (Joseph Gordon-Levitt), a youthful cop, as a fresh force for unswayable good in

Benoît Magimel. In French. Opening Aug. 24. (In limited release.)

### PREMIUM RUSH

Joseph Gordon-Levitt stars in this thriller, as a bicycle messenger who must deliver a package while evading the criminals who pursue it. Directed by David Koepp. Opening Aug. 24. (In wide release.)

### ROBOT AND FRANK

In this comedy, directed by Jake Schreier, a lonely man (Frank Langella) finds an emotional bond with a robot who serves as his butler. Co-starring Susan Sarandon, James Marsden, and Liv Ullmann. Opening Aug. 17. (Paris.)

### SLEEPWALK WITH ME

Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Aug. 24. (In limited release.)

### SOMEWHERE BETWEEN

A documentary, directed by Linda Goldstein Knowlton, about Chinese dissidents in the United States. Opening Aug. 24. (IFC Center.)

### TEDDY BEAR

Mads Mikkelsen directed this comedy, about a middle-aged weight lifter and mama's boy from Den-

mark who finds love in Thailand. In Danish, English, and Thai. Opening Aug. 22. (Film Forum.)



Gotham. Fans will hail the return of Gary Oldman, Michael Caine, and Morgan Freeman to the fray, together with the trusty Bat-pod, which gives perhaps the slickest performance of all. Whether Bale has done enough with our hero to make him interesting, as opposed to joyless and reclusive, over the course of three films is open to debate; however, Bale, who is a match for Heath Ledger's Joker, in "The Dark Knight," is a comparative exercise that should now be laid quietly aside.—A.L. (7/30/12) (In wide release.)

#### FANTOMAS

From the opening credits of this five-part series of scintillating crime and elusive punishment, from 1913-14, in which the actor René Navarre morphs into the multiple guises of the title archfiend, the director Louis Feuillade simultaneously quickens the pulse and shivers the subconscious. The story starts out with the investigation of a seemingly simple plot robbery, but the criminal mastermind's intricate plots involve a shadowy, far-flung conspiracy that infiltrates art and commerce, beau monde and demimonde, and reveals the solidity of daily life to be kaleidoscopically deceptive. Most of the hallucinatory action takes place in present-day Paris; Feuillade, a master of pictorial composition, texture, architecture, and gesture, captures interesting vistas and teeming details from the streets of Paris and imbues them with moods of mystery and menace. The ingenious sets provide a realistic backdrop for seemingly metaphysical transformations, and the ornate, weighty decor suggests a blandly respectable world that seethes with ambient chaos. Fantomas, who stops at nothing (not even the slaughter of innocents) to get his money, is a walking will to power; his covert reign of terror seems pregnant with the century's cataclysms—and with the surveillance-ready brightness of modernism that rose from its ruins. Silent.—Richard Brody (MOMA; Aug. 23-25).

#### KILLER JOE

Anybody who trusts in the serenity that comes with age will be taken aback by William Friedkin's new movie, four decades after "The French Connection" and "The Exorcist," here is one of his most brutal works to date. Matthew McConaughey stars as the Joe of the title: a Texas lawman who—when off duty, at least—regards the law as something to be broken with a vengeance. For a handsome fee, he'll murder on demand—good cop, for his last client, a wounded man named Chris (Emlie Hirsch), who hopes to have his own mother disposed of for the sake of an insurance claim. Also snared in the plot are Chris's father (Thomas Haden Church), sister (Juno Temple), and stepmother (Gina Gershon), all far more concerned by the mechanics of the plan than by its moral foulness. That everything should go wrong is no surprise, but the wrong turns are taken so viciously—Gershon, in particular, is appallingly treated, in close-up—that they lead the film, adapted from the play by Tracy Letts, to the brink of abusive farce. All of this is intended to crown the sense of danger in McConaughey's drawing, unbridled performance; in the event, however, the menace feels betrayed and dimmed by a director's perpetual wish to shock.—A.L. (8/6/12) (In limited release.)

#### MOONRISE KINGDOM

The latest Wes Anderson film takes place in 1965, on a fictional island off New England. At Camp Ivanhoe, Scout Master Ward (Edward Norton) runs a disciplined troop—at least, until one member, Sam Shaskusky (Jared Gilman), goes missing. Sam meets up with his beloved, the twelve-year-old Suzy Bishop (Saoirse Ronan), and together they flee into the wild, as matching outcasts; he has no parents, and she feels estranged from hers, who in turn seem estranged from each other. Such is the leitmotif that courses through the tale, echoing worries from earlier Anderson films: a sharp sense of orphanhood, affecting young and old alike, and redeemed only by the chance to belong—to a choir, to a clan, or to the heart of a fellow-loner. Fine use is made of Benjamin Britten, whose music so often conjoints the voices of children in a common effort; it sets the tone for the movie's naive, crisp and quirky, while its sadness belongs to those who feel marginalized and beyond the reach of harmony—the honors going to Bill Murray, as Suzy's despairing father, and Bruce Willis, in the role of the island's police chief. The result is as bookish and as brightly hued as you might expect, but there is a new strain of tenderness here,

and, more surprising still, a touch of old-fashioned madcap in the climax. With Tilda Swinton, resplendently costumed, as a busby by the name of Social Services.—A.L. (6/4/12) (In wide release.)

#### POLICE

In Maurice Pialat's stringently naturalistic drama, from 1985, Gérard Depardieu, as the Parisian detective Louis Mangin, exuberantly careens through the station house and the city at large as his self-confident swagger, hypersensitive bullshitter, and inflated sense of entitlement give rise to venomous effusions of racism, sexism, brutality, and indifference to the fine points of law. The plot is set in motion by the arrest of one of a band of North African drug dealers (Jonathan Leina) and his girlfriend, Noria (Sophie Marceau), who works with them (and, when it suits her fancy, against them). After taking up with their fast-talking, sarcastic lawyer (Richard Anconina)—Mangin's best friend—she throws herself at the detective, who loses his head and his bearings. Working from a story by the director Catherine Breillat, Pialat brings to life a teeming, high-relief throng of characters, including a cold, brilliant scholar of a crime boss, an old turnkey whose heart and mind are still in the wartime rice paddies of Vietnam, and a fancy prostitute (Sandrine Bonnaire). In the welcome absence of movie music, Pialat adorns the soundtrack with a heavy-metal symphony: a revolver's spinning barrel, the clang of a cell door, the dead snap of locks, the jingle of keys, and the dull thud of a desk top when struck by a suspect's forehead. In French and Arabic.—R.B. (MOMA; Aug. 27-28.)

#### RED HOOK SUMMER

Spoke Lee's new film, which is normally about a boy from Atlanta who spends the hot months in Brooklyn with his grandfather, is a clear departure, yet Lee is getting at things that mystify him, and parts of the film are moving. The picture is a lament for a community that got stuck in time—a group of African-Americans, living in the Red Hook housing projects, who gathered around a small, wood-paneled Baptist church called Lil' Peace of Heaven. The church is run by the boy's grandfather, Enoch Rouse (Clarke Peters), who's carrying a terrible secret that comes bursting out late in the film. Structurally, the movie is a mess, yet Lee creates moods of outright rage and heartache. He seems to be asking, over and over, emotionally gratifying affirmations of faith: are reconciling people to stasis and failure. It's a bitter question, and he doesn't offer an answer, but not many filmmakers would have the courage even to pose it.—D.D. (8/13 & 20/12) (In limited release.)

#### SLEEPWALK WITH ME

In this amiable first-person comedy, Mike Birbiglia (as director, co-writer, and star) gives his endearing persona the hard sell. He plays Matt, a standup comedian with a story to tell, and he tells it, straight to the camera, to punctuate its dramatization in flashbacks. Matt's problem is love—in parenting, marriage, which looms as the logical step in his eight-year relationship with Abby (Lauren Ambrose), a singer. But he's just not sure, and his doubts are tangled up with his career frustrations (he's working as a bartender at a small-time comedy club), his view of his parents' relationship (which he doesn't envy), and his own increasingly risky incidents of sleepwalking. Despite crisp anecdotal scenes of wry performance (notably, by James Rebhorn and Carol Kane, as the parents, and Alex Karpovsky, as a comic rival), Birbiglia lays the charm to rest while keeping the intimacy at arm's length. The crux of the story offers sharp practical wisdom in the modernist vein, regarding the comedian's confrontation with the danger and the challenge of self-revelation, but it's served up too smoothly and sweetly. Birbiglia may have doubts about love, but he seems desperate to be liked.—R.B. (In limited release.)

#### STRIKE

Sergei Eisenstein's pulsating first feature, about a strike in a Russian factory, caused another brilliant Soviet director, Grigori Kozintsev, to remark: "All that we need doing up to now is baby stuff." Eisenstein went straight from working in the Proletkult Theatre to making this revolutionary anthem, and while sections are designed to show off virtuoso stagecraft. The theatre tricks are nonetheless compelling, and at the start of his filmmaking ca-

reer, Eisenstein already had a fierce kinetic sense, a picture-maker's eye, and a peerless instinct for intensifying shock, suspense, and emotion with dynamic editing. The surging confrontations between the proletariat and police are justly celebrated. The film is equally powerful when Eisenstein suggests escalating tensions through shadowy, rippling imagery, or when he hinges massive scenes on emotionally charged details—like the strap of a humiliated factory employee who's getting ready to hang himself. *Cinematography* by Edouard Tissé. Silent.—Michael Srago (Anthology Film Archives; Aug. 24.)

#### TEA

The debut feature by Seth MacFarlane ("Family Guy") stars Mark Wahlberg as John, a Boston man who has spent his life coping with a wish come true. As a lonely eight-year-old boy, he dreamed that his Teddy bear would come to life and be his friend; by some miracle, it did so, and became famous—and now, at thirty-five, it's still living with the consequences. The formerly sweet and cuddly bear (voiced by MacFarlane) has matured into a perpetually adolescent, loathly party animal and dragged the sharp-witted and capable man into a dissolute adulthood of bong hits and bad TV. John has a girlfriend nonetheless—Lori (Mila Kunis), a successful young executive whose patience with his behavior and Ted's antics is wearing thin—and, to keep her, he needs to help his dependent find his own place in the world. The best thing in the movie is MacFarlane's clever underpinning of the talking plush toy's snarky-motormouth personality: with a shrewd and encyclopedic outpouring of pop-culture references, he renders the absurd concept reasonable and funnels Ted's story into the universal drama of a Hollywood has-been. It's the comedy that never comes to life—the heavy-handed guys all but invite a laugh track—and a sentimental denouement at Fenway Park is done by number. The movie's stuffing of creative sparks is still lifeless.—R.B. (In wide release.)

#### TO ROME WITH LOVE

Woody Allen's new movie, a Roman idyll, gently but surely moves back and forth between romantic comedy and satirical farce. We're in the realm of miraculous transformation—transformation through sex, through ambition, through chance, through illusion, through fate suddenly and unaccountably falling on someone's shoulders like a ton of baked lasagna. There are thirteen major characters and several minor ones—Americans and Italians mixing it up on the streets and in hotel beds. The stories never overlap, nor are they set in the same time frame. But the movie is held together visually by the many shades, indoors and out, of the glorious Roman gold ochre and thematically by the idea of seizing the moment—the magic you make for yourself by not being afraid. With Ellen Page, as a memorably dishonest actress, Allen, as a retired opera director who seizes a chance for entrepreneurial glory, Judy Davis, as his skeptical but loving wife, Fabio Armilato, as the opera man with a genius for singing Puccini in the shower, Penelope Cruz, as a knowing call girl, and Alec Baldwin, Jesse Eisenberg, Alessandro Tiberi, and Alessandra Mastroratti. The cinematography is by Darius Khondji.—D.D. (7/2/12) (In limited release.)

#### Also Playing

**HOPE SPRINGS:** In wide release. **TOTAL RECALL:** In wide release. **THE WATCH:** In wide release.

#### REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

*Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.*

#### ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"Essential Cinema," the films of Sergei Eisenstein. Aug. 23 at 7:30: "Battleship Potemkin" (1925; silent). ♦ Aug. 24 at 8: "Strike" (†). ♦ Aug. 25 at 5: "October" (1928; silent). ♦ Aug. 26 at 6:30: "Ivan the Terrible: Part 1" (1944; silent, in Russian).

#### B.M. CINEMATHEK

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"American Gagsters: Great Comedy Teams." Aug. 22 at 4:30 and 9:15: "Pat and Mike" (1952, George Cukor). ♦ Aug. 22 at 6:50: "Adam's Rib" (1949,

Cukor). • Aug. 23 at 4:30 and 9:15: "It Should Happen to You" (1954, Cukor). • Aug. 23 at 6:50: "Born Yesterday" (1950, Cukor). • Aug. 24 at 2 and 6:50: "The Lemon Drop Kid" (1951, Sidney Lanfield). • Aug. 24 at 4:30 and 9:15: "Son of Paleface" (1952, Frank Tashlin). • Aug. 24 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Some Like It Hot" (1959, Billy Wilder). • Aug. 26 at 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "The Apartment" (1960, Wilder).

#### FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—"The French Old Wave" Aug. 22 at 1, 4:40, and 8:20: "Pépé le Moko" (1937, Julien Duvivier). • Aug. 22 at 2:50, 6:30, and 10:10: "Touchez Pas au Grisbi" (1954, Jacques Becker). • Aug. 23 at 3, 5:30, and 8: "Toni" (1934, Jean Renoir). • Aug. 23 at 4:35, 7:05, and 9:35: "A Day in the Country" (1936, Renoir). • Aug. 24 at 1:10 and 7 and Aug. 25 at 3:30: "Boudou Saved from Drowning" (1932, Renoir). • Aug. 24 at 2:50: "Le Plaisir" (1952, Max Ophüls). • Aug. 24 at 4:40 and 8:40: "Lola Montès" (1955, Ophüls). • Aug. 25 at 7: "La Ronde" (1950, Ophüls). • Aug. 26 at 1: "Marius" (1931, Alexander Korda). • Aug. 26 at 3:25: "Fanny" (1932, Marc Allégret).

**FILM SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER**  
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (212-875-5610)—"Orientation: A New Arab Cinema," Aug. 24 at 7: "The Rif Lover" (2011, Narijis Nejjar). • Aug. 25 at 1: "Zandee" (2009, Michel Khleifi). • Aug. 25 at 5 and Aug. 27 at 9: "The Last Friday" (2011, Yahya Al-Abdallah). • Aug. 25 at 7 and Aug. 27 at 1:30: "Habibi" (2011, Susan Youssef). • Aug. 25 at 9:10 and Aug. 27 at 5:15: "City of Life" (2009, Ali F. Mostafaei). • Aug. 26 at 5:10 and Aug. 29 at 4:15: "Beirut Hotel" (2011, Danielle Arbid). • Aug. 26 at 7:15: "Cairo Exit" (2010, Hesham Ismail). • Aug. 26 at 9:15 and Aug. 27 at 3:15: "Amreeka" (2009, Cherien Dabis).

#### IFC CENTER

323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—"The films of Alfred Hitchcock," Aug. 24-26 at 11 a.m.: "Spellbound" (1945).

#### MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Nita Tins Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"An Auteurist History of Film," Aug. 22-24 at 1:30: "Ordet" (1954, Carl Theodor Dreyer; in Danish). • "Gauguin Thrillers," Aug. 22 at 4:30: "Band of Outsiders" (1964, Jean-Luc Godard). • Aug. 22 at 7:30 and Aug. 26 at 2:30: "Rififi" (1955, Jules Dassin). • Aug. 23 at 4:30 and Aug. 25 at 1: "Fantomas," Books 1 and 2 (†). • Aug. 23 at 7:30 and Aug. 25 at 3:45: "Fantomas," Book 3: "The Murderous Corpse" (†). • Aug. 24 at 4:30 and Aug. 25 at 6: "Fantomas," Book 6: "Fantomas vs. Fantomas" (†). • Aug. 24 at 6:30 and Aug. 25 at 7:30: "Fantomas," Book 12: "The False Judge" (†). • Aug. 27 at 4:30: "Eyes Without a Face" (1959, Georges Franju). • Aug. 27 at 7:30 and Aug. 28 at 4:30: "Police" (†).

#### MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave., at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"See It Big!" Aug. 24 at 7 and Aug. 25-26 at 3: "Brazil" (1985, Terry Gilliam). • Aug. 25-26 at 6: "Blue Velvet" (1986, David Lynch).

#### 92Y TRIBeca

200 Hudson St. (212-601-1000)—"Jeff Bridges, Before the Dude" Aug. 22 at 7:30: "Starman" (1984, John Carpenter).

#### READINGS AND TALKS

##### MCNALLY JACKSON BOOKS

Ray Bradbury, who died in June, would have been ninety-two on Aug. 22. Sam Weller and Mort Castile, the editors of "Shadow Show," a new short-

story collection inspired by the writer, celebrate the occasion with a reading from the book on that day at 7. The contributors Alice Hoffman and Joe Hill will be there in person; Neil Gaiman is set to participate via Skype. (52 Prince St. 212-274-1160.)

#### BOOKCOURT

Paula Bomar reads from "Nine Months," her debut novel, about motherhood and personal identity. (163 Court St., Brooklyn. 718-875-3677. Aug. 23 at 7.)

"WORD FOR WORD"  
Bryant Park's reading series presents an evening of ekphrastic poetry, with Sharon Dolin, Dean Kostos, Michael T. Young, and Eduardo Corral. (Sixth Ave. at 42nd St. For more information, call 212-768-4242. Aug. 28 at 7.)

#### ABOVE AND BEYOND

##### "OTHER ISLANDS BOAT TOUR"

Much of New York City is made up of islands and parts of islands. Beyond Manhattan, arguably its most desirable, and Rikers, arguably its least desirable, there are more than three dozen others. Sharon Seitz and Stuart Miller, a husband-and-wife writing team, have explored and researched the area for their book "The Other Islands of New York City"; on Aug. 22 at 6:30, under the auspices of Open House New York, the two lead a guided boat tour of the islands in the East River. (For more information, call 212-991-6470 or visit ohnyc.org.)

#### GOINGS ON DIGITAL

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## ON THE HORIZON



### CLASSICAL MUSIC SHROOMSVILLE

Sept. 8

One of the more picaresque entertainments surrounding the centenary of John Cage will be a concert presented at Cooper Union by the New York Mycological Society, which combines a performance of Cage's "Forty-nine Waltzes for the Five Boroughs" with visual backdrops of mushrooms galore. ([newyorkmnc.org](http://newyorkmnc.org).)

### THE THEATRE BIBLE VERSES

Sept. 13

Paul Rudd last appeared on Broadway opposite Julia

Roberts, in "Three Days of Rain," in 2006. This fall he returns in Craig Wright's "Grace," about a young couple planning to open a chain of Bible-themed motels in Florida. At the Cort, Dexter Bullard directs a cast that also includes Michael Shannon, Ed Asner, and Kate Arrington. (212-239-6200.)

### NIGHT LIFE

HOLD ME, THRILL ME  
Sept. 14-15

The venerable independent rock label Thrill Jockey has long supported a broad spectrum of contemporary artists. Now it celebrates its twentieth anniversary

with a series of shows around the country. Two performances, featuring Tortoise, Future Islands, Matmos, and others, are in New York City, the birthplace of the enterprise. ([thrilljockey.com/news](http://thrilljockey.com/news).)

### ART CRY FREEDOM Sept. 14-Jan. 6

The International Center of Photography's exhibition "Rise and Fall of Apartheid: Photography and the Bureaucracy of Everyday Life" examines the legacy of racial segregation in South Africa through some five hundred photographs, films, publications, and

documents spanning six decades. (212-857-0000.)

### MOVIES CRIMINALI Sept. 20-30

"Giallo Fever!," at Anthology Film Archives, presents a series of lurid Italian crime thrillers from the sixties and seventies, including Dario Argento's "The Bird with the Crystal Plumage" and Mario Bava's tribute to Alfred Hitchcock, "The Girl Who Knew Too Much." (212-505-5181.)

John Cage's "Forty-nine Waltzes for the Five Boroughs," at Cooper Union.



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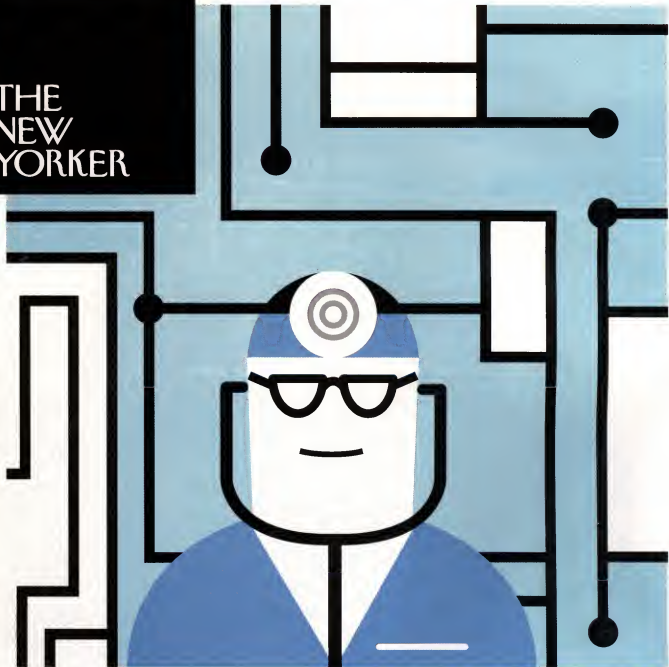


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## THE TALK OF THE TOWN

### COMMENT

#### WHO IS MITT ROMNEY?



When the Republican Party grantees and delegates gather in Tampa next week for their quadrennial Convention, attention will inevitably focus on Paul Ryan, the man Mitt Romney has chosen as his running mate. Ryan has been getting accustomed to the rigors of Presidential campaigning: protesters heckling him at the Iowa State Fair, reporters questioning him about his controversial proposals for Medicare; unnamed Republican operatives whispering to the press that his selection spells doom for the Party. At forty-two, Ryan isn't the youngest Vice-Presidential candidate in modern times—Dan Quayle, in 1988, was a year younger—but he is one of the most surprising.

Until Romney picked Ryan, the principal rationale for his candidacy had been that he was a practical businessman who could appeal to independents and get the economy moving. Now Romney has tethered himself to a conservative ideology who serves in an institution, the House of Representatives, that, according to the latest Gallup poll, has an approval rating of ten per cent. Such an abrupt reversal smacks of desperation. Not a Hail Mary pass, exactly, but akin to a struggling N.F.L. team that sud-

denly decides to adopt the wildcat formation and rely on fakery.

Ryan, whatever one thinks of his views, is a politician of clarity. The scion of a well-to-do Wisconsin family, he arrived in Washington at the age of twenty-one and has been there ever since. He worked for Jack Kemp's Empower America pressure group; he was elected to Congress when he was twenty-eight and moved up the ranks by staking out a position as a budget expert. He is a village explainer rather than a Michele Bachmann-style rantier, but his rapid rise nonetheless encapsulates the radicalization of the Republican Party. As chairman of the House Budget Committee, he has presented a vision that includes turning Medicare into a voucher program, shrinking non-

defense discretionary spending to less than three per cent of G.D.P. (about a quarter of its current level) by 2030, and eliminating all taxes on dividends, capital gains, and inheritances—practically the only taxes that some people of great wealth, such as Romney, actually pay. On non-economic issues, such as abortion and gun control, Ryan has a voting record that puts him in the same camp as Bachmann and other ultra-conservatives.

How much of the Ryan agenda does Romney endorse? For somebody who was once regarded as a moderate, the answer is a surprising amount. Take Medicare. Romney's campaign Web site says that, after a transition period during which the current system would remain in place, Romney would take the retirement health plan's budget and use it to pay "a fixed-amount benefit to each senior that he or she can use to purchase an insurance plan." That's another way of saying that he would convert Medicare to a Ryanesque voucher system.

On taxes and spending, Romney doesn't go as far as Ryan, but his budget plan is informed by the same school of supply-side economics that Ryan has promoted since his days with Kemp. Speaking to "CBS This Morning" last week about his and Ryan's budget plans, Romney said, "There are some differences, but they are very similar." Ryan would abolish the existing tax system, replacing it with just two rates: ten per cent and twenty-five per cent. Romney would keep the current tax brackets but reduce them all by a fifth. Neither has detailed how he would make





up for lost revenues. Independent assessments indicate that both plans would amount to yet another happy day for the already rich.

Both Romney and Ryan profess to be deficit hawks. But, by refusing to consider tax increases and exempting the Pentagon from any reductions in funding, they are obliged to propose cuts to other programs which are simply too big to be credible. To reach Romney's target of reducing federal spending to twenty per cent of G.D.P. by 2016, Congress would have to slash by forty per cent outlays on things like Medicaid, education, and transportation, one recent study suggested. Romney surely knows that this isn't going to happen—and shouldn't. For many independents and moderate Republicans, the best argument for Romney's candidacy was that, after adopting the rhetoric of the radical right during the primaries, he would recast himself, yet again, as an inoffensive, competent, nonideological technocrat: a former management consultant intent on turning around the finances of U.S.A. Corp. But, with the selection of Ryan, Romney has thrown in his lot with the most ideological wing of his party.

Politics aside, the outlines of a long-term budget fix are easy to discern. Once

the economy is strong enough to grow unassisted, Washington needs to adopt a range of spending cuts and revenue increases. Everything should be up for discussion: changes to the income-tax code, entitlement reform, restructuring the Pentagon, higher energy taxes, consumption taxes. Everything. Or close to it. But when, last summer, President Obama and House Speaker John Boehner tried to take some baby steps in this direction, Ryan helped sabotage their efforts. Now that he is on the national ticket—the third Republican Vice-Presidential candidate in a row from the right flank of the Party—what hope is there that a President Romney will face down the G.O.P. ultras and do what the country so evidently needs? And if there isn't any prospect of this happening why should moderates and independents vote for Romney?

Next week, the Republican standard-bearer will get the chance to address these issues. Ultimately, the Convention is about him, not about Ryan. But, in seeking to win over the American people, he is going to have to explain his choice of running mate and answer a fundamental question that has plagued him from the beginning: Who is Mitt Romney?

—John Cassidy

## THE PICTURES MOONSHINE KINGDOM



As a boy, during summer visits to his grandfather's house in southwest Virginia, Matt Bondurant was drawn to the rusty object that hung beneath the gun rack: a set of brass knuckles. He'd stand on a chair to touch them, imagining how it would be—*If you are still alive when I ran out of bullets, I will pull this hunk of metal off the wall and pummel you into unconsciousness*—but never daring to slip them on. "They scared me," Bondurant said recently, over a glass of corn whiskey at a Manhattan restaurant called the Tipsy Parson. "My grandfather was the kind of guy you didn't mess with."

The Bondurants were ornery giants; Matt, who is six feet two, was picked on by his cousins as the runt. Though Bondurant's father had moved away from hardscrabble Franklin County and Bondurant grew up "citized," as he puts it, he was fascinated by the knobby roots of the family tree, and in 2008 he published a historical novel, "The Wettest County in the World." It is the Depression-era tale of how the Bondurant Boys—Bondurant's grandfather, Andrew Jackson Bondurant, known as Jack, and Jack's older brothers Forrest and Howard—ran moonshine and beat the bejeezus out of everyone with those brass knuckles. And now the novel has become a movie, "Lawless," which opens next week.

Bondurant, a bespectacled forty-one-year-old who often touches his fingertips to his shaved head, as if to mold an emerging thought, said that he'd had few hard facts to go on, aside from some grand-jury transcripts and a couple of Walker Evans-style photographs. "In my family, you exchange pleasantries about the weather and the tobacco crop," he explained. "When my dad found some newspaper articles, twenty years ago, about how Jack and Forrest were both shot at the Maggodee Creek Bridge, he was shocked. When he asked Grandpa Jack about it, he just shrugged and showed him the bullet holes under here"—Bondurant indicated the armpit of his green polo shirt—"and that was about it. He died soon after."



MOLIG



Seeking a way in, Bondurant asked his father, "What does an eighteen-year-old in Franklin County in 1930 want?" He was told, "The same things they want now: they want a car, they want clothes, they want a girl, they want to be feared." Fear was the cayenne in that otherwise familiar stew. "Around Franklin, Forrest



Matt Bondurant

was like Rasputin, because you couldn't seem to kill him," Bondurant explains. When someone cut Forrest's throat from ear to ear, he staggered to the hospital, nine miles through the snow. Or so he always said, anyway.

Drawing on research and inference, Bondurant wound up portraying Forrest as indomitable, Jack as vain, and Howard as a ferocious drunk. Howard's grandchildren weren't entirely grateful. "One or two people asked me, 'How is this going to look?'" he said. "Because Howard comes off as a"—he touched his head, seeking an artful phrase—"a good guy who makes some bad decisions."

With "Lawless," the Bondurant Boys have now become giants of a different sort: movie stars. "I know my grandfather would have been delighted to be played by Shia LaBeouf, because he thought he was a flashy dude," Bondurant said. And what about Tom Hardy playing Forrest, who, in photographs, resembles beef jerky? "A really nice trade!"

"Lawless," while relatively faithful to the book, does amplify the growing legend. Having read about a moonshiner who cut off a rival's testicles and sent them to him in a jar of moonshine, Bondurant bequeathed that eloquent gesture to his

relatives. The film not only has the Boys send the cured gonads to their archfoe before the showdown at Maggodee Creek Bridge; it also evokes the gelding in vivid detail. Bondurant said, "My father was skeptical about the book at first, worried that it would give the impression that we were violent criminals. The movie won't really help with that. He hasn't seen a movie in a theatre in thirty years—he's not really familiar with the graphic depictions of violence they do now—so I've been preparing him, slowly." One testicle at a time.

The bill came for the "original moonshine"—which had been distilled in Culpeper, Virginia—and Bondurant, who'd asked for it on the rocks, observed that although his liquor had gone down smoothly, it was still an outsider's interpretation. "They never call it moonshine in Franklin County," he said. "And they're not sitting around sipping glasses of white lightning with giant glacier ice cubes. The truth is it's horrible straight. But mix it with some eggnog, a little cinnamon and nutmeg on top, it's dynamite!"

—Tad Friend

## AT SEA SOLO



The Olympic sailing events that recently took place south of London were not of particular interest to Alex Thomson, a British sailor who lives nearby. "Too many fishing boats," he says, of sailing close to land. Thomson is one of the world's best solo open-ocean sailors. His sport is not an Olympic one, in part because it would be impossible to stage within a host country's waters. His races—cross-Atlantic, cross-Pacific, around the world—require that Thomson spend six months a year at sea, much of it alone. To stay on course, he sleeps twenty to forty minutes at a time, every three or four hours. Whenever the sea gets rough, which happens often, and he starts to get lonely, which happens often, too, he closes his eyes, pinches the bridge of his nose, and channels happy thoughts. He knows that things are going to be O.K. when goose bumps cover his arms.

Thomson was in New York recently, resting between transatlantic training runs, and had docked his sixty-foot racing yacht next to the World Financial Center. He had left his wife and young son in England, as he frequently does, and was relieved to have company. "Being a sailor, I find that most people think that you grow a big beard and smoke a pipe and spend your whole day outside all wet," he said. "The reality is, I spend twelve hours a day in front of a computer." Thomson, who is thirty-eight, clean-shaven, and pipeless, was giving a tour of his boat. He pointed out a computer screen on which he maps his route, a blue plastic bucket—his toilet—and a water boiler. "There's the kitchen," he said, noting that he eats freeze-dried pasta made for the Norwegian Navy. "They have one called Game Casserole. The predominant ingredient is reindeer. I find it a bit rich, to be honest."

There were plenty of ferries, tugs, and water taxis, but no fishing boats, as Thomson pushed off and sailed toward the Statue of Liberty. He had agreed to circle the harbor with guests of his official sponsor, Hugo Boss, which had outfitted him with a wristwatch the size of a ship's steering wheel. When the boat approached Staten Island, the wind died, so Thomson reversed course, toward lower Manhattan. "Big gust coming in four, three, two, one," he said. On cue, the wind picked up. "It might feel like the boat's leaning over a lot, but it won't lean more than thirty degrees," he told his guests. "If you're worried about it, best thing to do is look at me. If I look worried, be worried. If I look happy, all's fine."

All was fine. Then—thud. The boat stopped. Thomson's smile disappeared. So did those on the faces of his well-dressed guests. "That's what it feels like when you hit a whale, or a shark," he said, looking around. "We hit a shark on the way back from New York. Halfway across the Atlantic, the boat just kind of stopped. I got out and said, 'What's going on?' The whole boat was shaking." How did he know it was a shark? "Before it happened, there were no birds around anywhere. And within, like, a couple of seconds the skies were full of birds, and they were diving into the water and picking up chunks of fish—big chunks of fish." The boat's keel had likely sliced the shark open.

After some guessing as to what had

been hit, suspicions settled on an underwater log. Thomson corrected course, keeping one eye on an iPad that displayed water depths. "Let's try to avoid any more forests," he said. Thomson did not want to damage his boat before this year's Vendée Globe, an around-the-world race that is open-ocean sailing's Olympics. The race takes three months and covers twenty-five thousand miles. "You come out of France, turn left, down to the bottom, left at Africa, around Antarctica, left at America, and back to France," Thomson said. Last time, two-thirds of the sailors were unable to finish. Among the causes: "capsized," "broken femur," "ran aground."

The biggest test, however, is mental. "You're going to get lonely," he said. "You're inside the boat, and the waves are crashing in. The autopilot's driving, and your brain's telling you, 'You're gonna fucking die, cause there's icebergs, and whales, and shit in the water.'" Thomson had visited a psychologist, who suggested two techniques for dealing with solitude and fear at sea. One was the pinched nose. The other was a visualization exercise. "What I do is take myself out of the boat and I sit up on the mast, in the clouds, and I look down at the boat," he said. "And I can see there's no whales. There's no icebergs. It's not as bad as it feels. So I can kind of relax."

—Reeves Wiedeman

## FIELD TRIP SPECIAL PARTICLE



Thunder rolled in a purple sky as the physicist Joe Incandela raced through the Swiss countryside in his car, past blurring fields of hay. Incandela, who is the spokesman for the Compact Muon Solenoid experiment at CERN, the organization for nuclear research, near Geneva, was trying to beat a convoy of American astronauts, with whom he'd just had lunch, back to the Large Hadron Collider, so that he could show them around. It was late July. Several weeks earlier, Incandela and his colleagues had announced that they'd ob-

served evidence of the existence of the Higgs boson, which helps explain—this is the version without terms like "top quark" and "the five-sigma signal"—how subatomic particles, and thus all the elementary matter in the universe, acquire mass. Incandela pushed a pair of sunglasses up into his hair, which is gray, with a choirboy part, betraying his American origins. (In addition to his duties at CERN, he is a professor at U.C. Santa Barbara.) He said that he'd hardly been sleeping. "I was at home, and I called one of the members of the group," he said, recalling the evening, in June, when he'd first got an inkling that they had the Higgs. "She said, 'I saw the data, and it's beautiful.'"

"It sounds like getting a sonogram," his passenger said.

"Yes—and not even knowing that you were pregnant."

Every once in a while, a concept of sufficient abstraction comes along—remember superstring theory?—that it is impossible to fathom without resorting to metaphor. We break out the football fields and the grains of sand. This summer, the Higgs has emerged as one of the genre's greatest muses. If it's not the treacle that prevents a balloon from traversing a room, or the hangers on who thwart a celebrity's course to the bar, it's a packet of sugar dumped—as someone did in a TV demonstration—on a bunch of Ping-Pong balls. Got it? In a single article, the *Times* likened the Higgs to both a "cosmic molasses" through which particles move, "gain[ing] heft the way a bill going through Congress attracts riders and amendments," and—in a particularly Homeric moment—"Omar Sharif materializing out of the shimmering desert as a man on a camel in 'Lawrence of Arabia.'" The Higgs suggests that there could be more dimensions of space-time than we previously thought. Incandela spoke about it in terms of a safari. You can bet that an elephant was there because of what the elephant left behind.

The astronauts, crew members of the space shuttle Endeavour, had been invited to tour CERN as a thank-you for having launched the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer—which CERN hopes will help locate antimatter—into space. They donned hard hats and descended three hundred feet into the cavern that houses the C.M.S., which is one of two

particle detectors at CERN that confirmed the presence of the Higgs. The C.M.S. is essentially a giant 3-D camera; it can take forty million pictures a second.

"We're all students of science," Greg Johnson, one of the astronauts, said. "We're on the same team—looking for the unknown unknowns."

Gabrielle Giffords, the former congresswoman, was on the tour as the guest of her husband, the astronaut Mark Kelly. The wives wore A.M.S.-themed necklaces, with little stones for particles. Because of concerns about the C.M.S.'s powerful magnetic field, Giffords, who was in a wheelchair, stayed behind when the group went down to see the machine.

Kelly held out a set of keys, which the detector yanked sideways, like flags in the wind. "Can you take a video?" he asked a friend. "I want to show Gabby."

"It's about five hundred gauss of magnetic field," Kelly said to the camera. "Gabby, this is why you didn't come in here."

Incandela approached.

"So you found the Higgs?" Kelly asked.

"There were seven hundred people working on it," Incandela replied. He began his spiel about how the Higgs is a very special particle that gives mass to other particles.

"What does that mean?" Kelly asked.

"This is the complicated part," Incandela said. "You know how superconductors work, right? So, if you put a photon inside a superconductor..." A few minutes went by. Incandela tried another angle. "We're swimming along the surface of the water, and there are fish under there," he said. "If we cast some bait, we can lure them out."

The group gathered for a photograph in front of the detector. "Say Higgs!" someone shouted. They did.

Afterward, Kelly asked Incandela about the implications of the discovery. "We're here—there's something on the other side of the Higgs that we're interacting with, that could be even bigger than the Higgs," Incandela said. "We're just starting to realize what we did." No elephants or fish were required to make his excitement clear.

—Lauren Collins

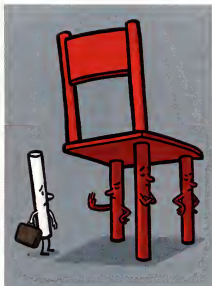
## THE FINANCIAL PAGE THE TRACK-STAR ECONOMY

If one of the big stories of this year's Olympics was Team U.S.A.'s return to the top of the medal charts, London also showcased another impressive American feat: we trained many of the best athletes who competed against us. Nearly four hundred Olympians who this year represented other countries went to school in the U.S., and many other foreign athletes live and train here—like the British runner Mo Farah, who won gold medals in the five and ten thousand metres after moving to Portland last year to work with the legendary marathoner Alberto Salazar. In effect, the U.S. helps global talent develop the skills needed to beat us.

This is not a phenomenon confined to the Olympics. The U.S. is the world's most popular destination for foreign students, hundreds of thousands of whom go to college and graduate school here. This is all to the good: just as the Olympics are more exciting when lots of countries have top-level competitors, the global economy is more dynamic when knowledge is more widely distributed. But there's also a missed opportunity for the U.S.: many of these foreign students would prefer to stay and put their skills to work here after they graduate, but they can't get work visas. What's more, studies estimate that hundreds of thousands of highly skilled immigrants already working here find themselves stuck in immigration limbo for years, waiting for visa and green-card applications to be approved. These are well-educated, motivated workers who want to play for our side. Yet we're making it difficult for them to do so.

Since the nineteen-sixties, U.S. immigration policy has been designed to encourage the immigration of family members rather than of skilled workers. In 1990, the number of employment-based permanent visas was capped at a hundred and forty thousand a year. Astonishingly, that number hasn't changed since, even though the U.S. economy is now sixty-six per cent bigger, and, with the rise of India and China, the supply of global talent has grown sharply. We

also cap the visa allocation for each country, regardless of size, at seven per cent of the total number of visas, so only a fraction of the applications from China and India get approved. (The number of temporary work visas is also capped, at eighty-five thousand a year.) As of 2006, according to one study, more than half a million highly skilled immigrants were waiting for permanent visas, and the backlog in some visa categories was decades long. Other countries, meanwhile, have positioned themselves to benefit from the talent we're turning away. Australia allows in almost as many skilled workers annually as the U.S., despite having a fraction of the population, and Canada has aggres-



sively courted the highly skilled, nearly quadrupling the percentage of permanent visas it grants for employment.

Of course, with unemployment here above eight per cent, too little immigration may not seem like a bad thing: surely we need more jobs, not more workers? But this is a shortsighted view. Economies are not static, with a limited set of resources to go around. As the work of the economist Paul Romer has shown, economies grow faster when there is more innovation, and having more smart people in the workforce is a key driver of innovation. And the quickest, cheapest way to get more smart people is to make it easy for them to move here. What's more, historically there has been a clear connection between immigration in the

U.S. and entrepreneurship, with immigrants creating companies (and jobs) at a disproportionate rate. In one famous study, the social scientist AnnaLee Saxenian showed that Chinese and Indian immigrants alone founded a quarter of Silicon Valley start-ups between 1980 and 1998, while a 2007 study found that a quarter of all technology and engineering start-ups between 1995 and 2005 were founded by immigrants. On a larger scale, more than forty per cent of the companies in the 2010 Fortune 500 were started by immigrants or their children.

Immigration is also good for innovation in general. One study found that in 2006 foreign nationals living in the U.S. contributed to almost twenty-six per cent of U.S. international-patent applications, and last year immigrants contributed to three-quarters of the patents that came out of the country's ten most prolific research universities. The national debate on immigration makes it seem as if immigrant workers were competing with native-born workers for shares of a fixed pie. That's always a questionable assumption, but in the case of skilled immigrants it's simply wrong. Their presence makes the pie bigger for everyone.

In theory, fixing the system should not be a tough thing to do, since the immigration of highly skilled workers is one of the few issues on which there is genuine bipartisan support. Mitt Romney and Barack Obama, remarkably enough, have called for streamlining the system in similar ways, and John Conyers, a Democrat, and John Chaffetz, a Republican, are sponsoring a recent House bill that would make it easier for small-business owners in the U.S. to get green cards. The catch is that, for all this bipartisan comity, there is no urgency in Washington on the issue, and voter anxiety about the weak economy and the scarcity of jobs gives politicians an excuse for inaction. Tough times have always lent themselves to nativist sentiments and closed-door policies. But in the case of highly skilled immigrants these policies are a recipe for stagnation. The U.S. is excellent at importing cheap products from the rest of the world. Let's try importing some human capital instead.

—James Surowiecki

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## THE POLITICAL SCENE

## SCHMOOZE OR LOSE

*Obama doesn't like cozying up to billionaires. Could it cost him the election?*

BY JANE MAYER



The summer before the 2010 congressional elections, the Democrats' prospects began to look alarmingly weak. On July 28th, President Barack Obama flew to New York City for two high-priced fund-raisers aimed at replenishing his party's war chest, largely with money from Wall Street. For a busy President, such events could be a chore. And Obama had never been a Wall Street type. In 1983, Obama, then a recent college graduate who wore a leather jacket and smoked cigarettes, took a job on the periphery of New York's financial sector: for a year, he worked for Business International, a

firm that produced economic trade reports for multinational companies. According to Obama's mother, he told her that this foray into the corporate world amounted to "working for the enemy," as David Maraniss recounts in his new biography, "Barack Obama: The Story." By the time that Obama ran for President, in 2008, his relations with the financial industry had grown warmer, and he attracted more donations from Wall Street leaders than John McCain, his Republican opponent, did. Yet this good feeling did not last, despite the government's bailout of the banking sector. Many financial titans felt that the

*Many rich Democrats oppose the very idea of Super PACs, and refuse to support them.*

BARRY BLITT

President's attitude toward the "one per cent" was insufficiently admiring, even hostile.

The planning for the fund-raisers seemed to underline this estrangement. Obama's first event was a 6 P.M. dinner at the Four Seasons. About forty contributors, many of them from Wall Street, had paid thirty thousand dollars each to dine with him. Some of the invitees were disgruntled supporters who felt unfairly blamed for the country's economic problems, and they wanted to vent about what they considered Obama's anti-business tone. But the President did not have enough time to hear them out—or even share a meal—because after only an hour he was scheduled to leave for the second fund-raiser, at the downtown home of Anna Win-tour, the editor of *Vogue*. At the Four Seasons, the President could spend about seven minutes per table, each of which accommodated eight donors. This was fund-raising as speed-dating.

The President's staff knew that Obama wouldn't have a moment to eat properly that day, and that it would be hard for him to do so while being the focus of attention at the fund-raisers. So time was set aside at the Four Seasons for Obama to grab a bite, in a "ready room," with Reggie Love, his personal aide, and Valerie Jarrett, his close friend, senior adviser, and liaison to the business community. This arrangement, however, inadvertently left the impression that Obama preferred his staff's company to that of the paying guests.

"Obama is very meticulous—they have clockwork timing," one of the attendees says. "After a few minutes at each table, a staffer would come and tap him on the shoulder, and he'd get up. But when people pay thirty thousand they want to *talk* to you, and take a picture with you. He was trying to be fair, and that's great, but every time he started to have a real conversation he got tapped."

The attendee appreciates that such events must get tiresome for Obama. "Each person, at each table, says to the President, 'Here's what you have to do . . .' At the next table, it's the same." Even so, he noted that Bill Clinton—who set the gold standard for the art form known as "donor maintenance"—would have presided over the same event with more enthusiasm: "He would have

stayed an extra hour." After that Four Seasons dinner, the attendee adds, "people were a little mad."

Top Obama donors began grumbling on the first day of the Administration. "The swearing-in was the beginning of pissing off the donors," a longtime Washington fund-raiser says. "During the inaugural weekend, they didn't have the capacity to handle all the people who had participated at the highest levels, because there were so many." One middle-aged widow, from whom the fund-raiser had secured fifty thousand dollars, got four tickets to the swearing-in, but none of them were together. "She was so offended!" the fund-raiser says. "And I got no credit, by the way, for bringing her in. Important donors need to be cultivated so that they're there four years later."

As the Washington fund-raiser sees it, the White House social secretary must spend the first year of an Administration saying, "Thank you, thank you, thank you." Instead, the fund-raiser says, Obama's first social secretary, Desirée Rogers—a stylish Harvard Business School graduate and a friend from Chicago—made some donors feel unwelcome. Anita McBride, the chief of staff to Laura Bush, says, "It's always a very delicate balance at the White House. Do donors think they are buying favors or access? You have to be very conscious of how you use the trappings of the White House. But you can go too far in the other direction, too. Donors are called on to do a lot. It doesn't take a lot to say thank you." One of the simplest ways, she notes, is to provide donors with "grip-and-grin" photographs with the President. "It doesn't require a lot of effort on anyone's part, but there's been a reluctance to do it" in the Obama White House. "That can produce some hurt feelings."

Big donors were particularly offended by Obama's reluctance to pose with them for photographs at the first White House Christmas and Hanukkah parties. Obama agreed to pose with members of the White House press corps, but not with donors, because, a former adviser says, "he didn't want to have to stand there for fourteen parties in a row." This decision continues to provoke disbelief from some Democratic fund-raisers. "It's as easy as falling off a log!" one says. "They just want a picture of themselves with the

President that they can hang on the bathroom wall, so that their friends can see it when they take a piss." Another says, "Oh, my God—the pictures, the fucking pictures!" (In 2010, the photograph policy was reversed; Rogers left the Administration that year.)

Creating a sense of intimacy with the President is especially important with Democratic donors, a frustrated Obama fund-raiser argues: "Unlike Republicans, they have no business interest being furthered by the donation—they just like to be involved. So it makes them more needy. It's like, 'If you're not going to de-regulate my industry, or lower my taxes, can't I at least get a picture?'"

Democrats involved in the 2012 campaign say that the President and his White House staff have markedly improved their donor-maintenance skills. In June, Obama spent an evening attending a successful forty-thousand-dollar-a-head fund-raiser, along with Bill Clinton, in the Upper East Side town house of Marc Lasry, the billionaire C.E.O. of Avenue Capital Group. (Clinton is expected to help at other such events.) But if Obama hopes to catch up with his Republican opponent, Mitt Romney, in the 2012 money race, he will need to get a lot more rich Democrats to empty their pockets.

In the past, a President's ability to charm the super-rich might not have mattered much. A decade ago, however, wealthy Democrats and Republicans began circumventing limits on direct campaign contributions by making enormous donations to political groups that were technically separate from campaigns but effectively served as their proxies, often by funding negative ads. In 2004, the outspoken liberal financier George Soros gave \$27.5 million—then a record amount—to groups opposing President George W. Bush. The strategy provoked widespread censure. (The Republican National Committee accused Soros of having "purchased the Democratic Party.") Richard Hasen, an election-law expert at the University of California at Irvine, says that "a legal cloud hung over" such efforts to sway elections. But in 2010 the Supreme Court, in the landmark case *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, ruled that groups could make "independent expenditures" without



limits, because such spending amounted to "political speech." Subsequently, a lower court ruled, in *Speechnow.org v. Federal Election Commission*, that individuals could pool unlimited resources in order to support or criticize candidates, as long as these efforts were not explicitly coordinated with official campaigns. Since then, the number of indirect gifts has soared, giving rise to the "Super PAC," and very wealthy Americans have begun wielding increasingly disproportionate power in U.S. politics.

As Politico reported recently, a pool of only twenty-one hundred people has given a total of two hundred million dollars to the 2012 campaigns and their Super PACs—fifty-two million dollars more than the combined donations of the two and a half million voters who have given two hundred dollars or less. In other words, the top .07 per cent of donors are exerting greater influence on the 2012 race than the bottom eighty-six per cent. And this accounts only for publicly disclosed donations: much of the money raised during this election cycle consists of secret gifts to "nonprofit public-welfare" groups that claim to have no overt political agenda.

Obama's 2012 campaign has held a record number of fund-raisers, but it has focussed on collecting the relatively small sums of money that can be contributed directly to a federal candidate's campaign. This year, the limit on such "hard" donations is five thousand dollars per candi-

date, and thirty thousand eight hundred dollars to a national political party. Obama has consistently led Romney in direct donations, though the gap is narrowing. Romney, however, has overwhelmingly outpaced Obama in the kind of "mega" donations that have flourished since the Citizens United ruling. By the end of July, the two biggest Super PACs allied with Romney, Restore Our Future and American Crossroads, had raised about a hundred and twenty-two million dollars. The most prominent Super PACs allied with Obama, Priorities USA Action and American Bridge 21st Century, had raised only about thirty million.

By August, at least thirty-three American billionaires had each given a quarter of a million dollars, or more, to groups whose aim is to defeat Obama. At this point in the campaign, most of that money is funding attack ads in swing states like Colorado and Virginia. Federal-election reports indicate that twenty-seven of those billionaires have given large donations to Restore Our Future, which was founded by former Romney aides, and to American Crossroads, which was conceived by the Republican political operative Karl Rove. News reports have linked six of the billionaires to nonprofit social-welfare groups that aren't required to identify contributors. Earlier this month, one of those groups, Americans for Prosperity—which was founded, in part, by the billionaire industrialist brothers Charles and David

Koch—purchased a reported twenty-five million dollars in advertising time; the spots are now airing on television stations in eleven swing states. Though Americans for Prosperity is purportedly nonpartisan, its ads attack Obama for presiding over a growing federal deficit.

According to ProPublica, Americans for Prosperity and another conservative group have accounted for more than eighty per cent of spending by social-welfare nonprofits in the 2012 election cycle. Conservative social-welfare groups have already spent some seventy million dollars on television ads, whereas liberal groups have spent only \$1.6 million.

Meanwhile, only three billionaires have contributed at least a quarter of a million dollars to Priorities USA, the largest pro-Obama Super PAC. George Soros has given money to the Super PAC American Bridge, which produces opposition research for liberal candidates. Warren Buffett, America's second-richest man, is one of Obama's most high-profile supporters, but he has declared that he will not support Super PACs, saying, "I don't want to see democracy go in that direction."

This imbalance has caused alarm among Democratic strategists, and Obama has warned—perhaps with some exaggeration—that, unless wealthy supporters make large gifts, he will become the only sitting President in recent history to be outspent in a campaign. In June, *The Daily Beast* obtained a recording of a fund-raising call that Obama made from Air Force One, in which he told potential donors not to be surprised if a couple of Republican billionaires "wrote twenty-million-dollar checks" to buy "all the TV time," leaving Democrats "flat-footed in September or October."

It's not easy for Obama to play the current money game, since he has repeatedly called it an unethical contest. He reserved some of the harshest words of his Presidency for the Citizens United ruling, saying that he couldn't "think of anything more devastating to the public interest." Indeed, advocates of campaign-finance reform think that it's perverse to fault Obama for being insufficiently solicitous of billionaires. Meredith McGehee, the policy director of the Campaign Legal Center, says, "The whole question of whether the President's donors are



*"I want to vacation where we can look at something scenic from someplace climate-controlled."*

happy just boils down to how corrupting this whole system is. That the President, with all the other things on his plate, has to worry about keeping high rollers happy is just sad." She adds, "We're heading toward plutocracy, pretty clearly."

David Axelrod, the senior strategist of Obama's 2012 campaign, warns that the Citizens United decision may have permanently tilted the playing field away from not just Obama but all future Democratic candidates. "The Supreme Court is saying that campaign spending is a matter of free speech, but it has set up a situation where the more money you have the more speech you can buy," Axelrod says. "That's a threatening concept for democracy." He adds, "If your party serves the powerful and well-funded interests, and there's no limit to what you can spend, you have a permanent, structural advantage. We're averaging fifty-dollar checks in our campaign, and trying to ward off these seven- or even eight-figure checks on the other side. That disparity is pretty striking, and so are the implications. In many ways, we're back in the Gilded Age. We have robber barons buying the government."

Arnold Hiatt, the former chairman of Stride Rite shoes, has been one of the most consistent liberal donors in recent decades, and also one of the most vocal proponents of public campaign financing. Though he is sympathetic to Obama's fund-raising challenges, he also thinks that the campaign may have miscalculated. "The people who have the wherewithal have not been cultivated," he says. "Citizens United didn't come along until quite late. I think Obama thought he wouldn't need those people."

As Hiatt sees it, "Obama is in a bind." Throughout his career, the President has supported campaign-finance reform. Not only did he speak out against the Citizens United ruling; he initially declined to encourage supporters to donate to Priorities USA. By the end of 2011, however, Obama's campaign managers had realized that Super PACs opposing the President posed a lethal threat. At Obama's campaign headquarters, in Chicago, Jim Messina, the campaign manager, wrote "\$800,000,000" on a whiteboard, and told Axelrod that the Republicans' indirect-donation network was capable of

raising at least that amount to defeat Obama.

In February, after considerable debate, during which some advisers urged the President to stick to his principles and preserve his opposition to Citizens United as a political issue, the campaign bowed to the new economic reality and announced that it would begin encouraging donations to Super PACs that supported Obama's candidacy. Campaign officials even promised to send Administration members to speak to potential Super PAC donors—though Obama would not do so himself.

"We concluded we couldn't play touch football if they were playing tackle," Axelrod says, adding that the eight-hundred-million-dollar figure now looks quaint. He says that Republican spending in the Presidential race, including that of outside groups, may exceed \$1.2 billion.

Hiatt worries that Obama's reversal may be too little, too late. "He said he'd accept money from Super PACs, but he's done nothing to encourage it," Hiatt says. "It's cost him dearly."

Hiatt is a member of the Democracy Alliance, a group of wealthy liberal donors led by Rob McKay, an heir to the Taco Bell fortune. In November, Hiatt asked the President to speak to the group, but Obama declined; the White House said that he was too busy. In June, 2011, the Federal Election Commission announced that candidates could be "featured guests" at Super PAC events, but such interactions remain a legal gray area. Hiatt believes that Obama was concerned that giving the speech would violate the spirit of campaign-finance law, which bars candidates from "coordinating" with outside fund-raising groups.

Romney has played by different rules. Last year, he declared, "I'm not allowed to communicate with a Super PAC in any way, shape, or form. If we coordinate in any way whatsoever, we go to the big house." Yet he has come very close to crossing that line. He has communicated directly with Super PAC supporters on many occasions, stopping only at directly soliciting funds from them.

In July, 2011, Romney attended a private dinner in New York, purportedly to

show his appreciation for two dozen current and potential donors. After delivering brief remarks, he departed, leaving the solicitation of funds to others. In June, Romney mingled with wealthy supporters at a weekend retreat at a Utah ski resort. That same weekend, the Huffington Post later revealed, two hundred wealthy guests attended a nearby luncheon featuring a speech by Karl Rove,

the architect of American Crossroads, the pro-Romney Super PAC. Technically, the two events were independent, though even that distinction was blurry; the luncheon was sponsored by an investment fund led by Romney's eldest son, Tagg, and the finance chief of Romney's campaign, Spencer Zwick. And in July, at a fund-raising breakfast in Jerusalem, Romney sat next to

the top donor to pro-Romney Super PACs: the casino magnate Sheldon Adelson, who has so far spent \$41.1 million of his \$24.9-billion fortune on the effort to defeat Obama and other Democrats, and has pledged to spend as much as a hundred million dollars.

Of the proposed Democracy Alliance event, Hiatt says, "Obama wouldn't have asked for money, but he could have addressed a group of very wealthy progressive donors who have a Super PAC." In the end, Hiatt says, Obama must have considered it "too close for comfort." Part of Obama's reluctance, he believes, was based on principle, and another part was personal. "Obama is not a lover by nature," Hiatt says. "He is so private, and so emotionally and intellectually honest. He doesn't like to stroke people."

Many top Democratic donors are as disheartened as Obama is about the top-dollar gamesmanship unleashed by the Citizens United ruling. Many wealthy liberals oppose the very idea of Super PACs. A Democratic billionaire told me, "I'm happy to spend, but not on Super PACs. They don't seem like they should be legal. They're undemocratic." Asked if he'd continue to abstain if it meant that Obama would lose, he said, "I find it hard to believe Obama won't win."

Arnold Hiatt has not yet given money to Priorities USA, the Super PAC. Instead, he has tried to persuade other,



even wealthier liberals to do so. "If I put a million dollars in, I'd like to know it has company," he says. "We can leverage it, to raise a hundred million." But so far the Democrats have lacked what is known as a "lead donor": a high-profile figure who contributes a splashy amount and signals to other big players that it is time to do the same. "It's really sad," Hiatt says. "You could buy this election for a billion dollars."

Another major Democratic donor asks, "Where's Penny Pritzker? Where's George Soros?" Pritzker, a businesswoman and the billionaire heiress to the Hyatt Hotel fortune, was Obama's campaign-finance chairperson in 2008. Both Pritzker and Soros have given five thousand dollars to Obama's official campaign, but neither has given money to Priorities USA. "Whatever it is that has made George Soros and Penny Pritzker not write checks to the Super PAC is a very serious weakness," the major donor says. Also missing from the Priorities USA roster is the insurance-company mogul Peter Lewis, who donated millions to Democratic efforts in 2004; this year, he is reportedly focussing his giving elsewhere, including on a broad campaign to legalize marijuana. In 2008, David Geffen, the Hollywood music and film producer, made headlines by breaking with the Clintons in favor of supporting Obama. This time around, Geffen has contributed the legal maximum amount to the Obama campaign and the Democratic Party, but he has given nothing to Priorities USA. Two acquaintances of Geffen's say that he has complained about Obama's remoteness since becoming President. (Geffen says that he "totally supports this President.")

"There's been no thanks for anyone!" the major Democratic donor says. He adds that in 2008 he gave "multiple millions" to groups working to elect Obama. But, he notes, although he has attended various White House functions, and has met Obama on several occasions, "I don't think they have a clue who I am. I don't think they even know how much I gave." He says that he has been introduced twice to Jarrett, "and neither time did she remember who I am." Instead, he says, "she seemed to think she was blessing me by breathing in the same space." Despite repeated pitches, he has not yet given money to Priorities USA. In his view, the

Obama White House has not followed the fundamental rule of donor maintenance, which he himself has practiced while fund-raising for other causes: "You have to suck up!" With Obama, he says, "I don't know if it's a personality thing, an ego thing, or an intellectual thing. I just don't get it. But people want to be kissed. They want to be thanked."

Obama, he says, is "so interested in doing the right thing that he thought other people would be interested in him for doing the right thing, and he thinks that's all that's needed."

Axelrod defends the President. "He's worked hard to raise the money we need and by no means takes that support for granted," he says. "He appreciates it. But he's not carnivorous about it. He doesn't see himself as Fund-raiser-in-Chief."

Obama sought the Presidency in part because he hoped to alter the relationship between powerful financial interests and those who govern. On his first day in office, he hanned lobbyists from his Administration. He later noted, "One of the reasons I ran for President was because I believed so strongly that the voices of everyday Americans—hardworking folks doing everything they can to stay afloat—just weren't being heard over the powerful voices of the special interests in Washington." During the 2008 campaign, he discouraged supporters from contributing unlimited sums to "527 groups," the predecessors of Super PACs.

Obama acknowledges that his record on campaign-finance issues is not entirely pure. In 2008, after championing campaign-finance reform in the Senate, he broke his own pledge to accept public financing as a Presidential candidate, and became instead the first nominee since Watergate to depend entirely on private funds. The decision was pragmatic: he was so popular that he handily raised more money than John McCain, ultimately spending a record-breaking seven hundred and forty-five million dollars. In 2007, Obama admitted that he suffered "from the same original sin of all politicians, which is: We've got to raise money." But he insisted that he would fight to reform the system: "The argument is not that I'm pristine, because I'm swimming in the same muddy water. The argument is that I know it's muddy and I want to clean it up."

Maraniss, the Obama biographer, believes that the President's attitude toward money is complicated. "There is a misimpression that his family was alienated from the capitalist system," Maraniss says. "Not so." He points out that both Obama's grandmother Madelyn Dunham, a vice-president at the Bank of Hawaii, and his mother, Anne Dunham, an anthropologist who developed a micro-loan program for Indonesian artisans, worked in the financial realm. But it's also true that Obama never had any interest in business, and that instead of pursuing more lucrative opportunities he chose to become a poorly paid community organizer in Chicago. While attending Harvard Law School, Obama spent his one summer at a corporate firm debating fellow-associates about the need to "give back" to society.

Obama met his wife, Michelle, at the firm. Although the two were Ivy League graduates, it's often forgotten how atypical their economic backgrounds were in those circles. The First Lady emphasized this at a recent campaign event in New Hampshire, explaining that Barack "knows what it means when a family struggles," for "he is the son of a single mother who struggled to pay the bills and put him and his sister through school." Michelle herself, as a child, lived in a bungalow on Chicago's South Side which was so small that her parents slept on the living-room couch. While she was at Princeton, her aunt worked nearby, as a domestic servant. According to Jodi Kantor, the author of "The Obamas," Michelle and Barack shared an early conviction that the gap between the rich and the poor had less to do with hard work and merit than with "opportunity, power, access and wealth." Obama continues to see economic success as the result of many factors besides individual effort, and, consequently, he may be less awed by wealth than others.

During his rise in Chicago politics, Obama won over many rich donors, including Pritzker. But, in his book "The Audacity of Hope," he writes warily of their seductive influence. He describes the "law firm partners and investment bankers, hedge fund managers and venture capitalists" whom he courted for donations to his 2004 Senate campaign as mostly "smart, interesting people," who asked for no specific favors. Yet, Obama

wrote, politicians who spent too much time among the wealthy risked losing touch with the “frequent hardship of the other 99 percent of the population—that is, the people that I’d entered public life to serve.”

Obama, Maraniss says, “showed no disdain for raising money,” but he demonstrated less reverence for wealthy backers than many other politicians did. Maraniss sees Obama as a man with “a moviegoer’s or writer’s sensibility, where he is both participating and observing himself participating, and views much of the political process as ridiculous or surreal, even as he is deep into it.” He adds, “I think donors can sense this ambivalence.”

A former adviser to the President points out that Obama rose so quickly in national politics that “he never built a relationship at all with traditional Democratic donors.” Just a dozen years ago, in 2000, Obama had so few Democratic Party connections that he couldn’t get a floor pass at the Democratic National Convention. In 2004, he ran for the U.S. Senate in Illinois, and was one of several contenders in a Democratic primary; big, national donors were not inclined to involve themselves in the contest, and therefore did not get to know him. That year, however, he gave a galvanizing keynote speech at the Democratic National Convention. Vaulted to fame, Obama no longer needed to search for money—it flowed his way. He was in the Senate for only two years before announcing his Presidential candidacy, and during that time he was the most sought-after attraction at other Democrats’ fund-raisers. He spent little time cultivating his own donor network. “Obama didn’t develop the deep personal relationships with fund-raisers that most people have by the time they run for President,” the former adviser says. By contrast, Bill Clinton, who had been collecting supporters since his undergraduate days, at Georgetown, had a huge network in place when he ran for the Presidency, in 1992.

When Obama ran for the Presidential nomination against Hillary Clinton, in 2008, most of the traditional large Democratic donors supported her. His other rivals—Joseph Biden, Christopher Dodd, and John Edwards—had, after years in the Senate, also developed finance networks. The Obama campaign



*“They broke all the Commandments. Can they have some more?”*

was forced to build an alternative financial base, consisting of a few major Illinois donors, such as Pritzker, and an intricate network of small- and medium-sized donors, many of whom were new to national politics. Obama’s team famously utilized social media to engage first-time, small donors.

But, as Richard Wolfe writes in “Renegade,” his book about Obama’s 2008 campaign, contrary to Obama’s “carefully cultivated image, the money did not grow at the grass roots.” Before Obama secured the Democratic nomination, funds raised on the Internet accounted for only a fraction of his haul. Instead, he attended a back-breaking number of fund-raisers, and asked everyone he and his supporters knew to contribute to his campaign the maximum legal amount of hard money, which was then forty-six hundred dollars. Obama’s operation, Wolfe writes, was “a hybrid of corporate management and community organizing.” It was not a chummy collaboration between a candidate and super-wealthy players. Harold Ickes, the veteran Democratic strategist, says, “The Obama people were tutored in the context of small money. They saw the big money as corrupt.”

Bill Clinton, by contrast, was so in-

ventively solicitous of the rich that he was accused—falsely, he insisted—of auctioning off sleepovers in the Lincoln Bedroom. People raising Democratic funds this year say that wealthy donors regularly complain of getting poorer treatment than they did during the Clinton years, when the President and Terry McAuliffe, his campaign-finance chairperson, formed a fireless tag team. One fund-raiser says, “There used to be regularized dinners, and stays at the Lincoln Bedroom or Camp David. This President spends his time with his friends, and doesn’t much suffer being around people just because they gave money. He does more than you think, but it’s a different culture. It’s much less than either Bush or Clinton. Those Administrations knew when it was somebody’s birthday, or someone’s grandson’s bar mitzvah.”

Hiatt, the former Stride Rite chairman, has witnessed at first hand the difference between Obama and Bill Clinton. In 1996, Hiatt divided half a million dollars among thirty-eight congressional candidates (all of whom were committed to campaign-finance reform). He recalls, “That gave me the dubious distinction of being the second-largest contributor to the Democratic National Committee, which I shuddered at.” In the spring of

1997, he says, President Clinton invited him to a dinner. When he arrived, he found thirty top contributors seated around a table. "It was so vulgar," he says. "The biggest donors were closest to the President. On his right was Bernard Schwartz, of Loral Corporation, who was later given permission to launch a satellite in China." (Schwartz, who was cleared of accusations that his donations were improper, says he is "truly sorry" for having given large sums, in indirect gifts, to Democrats—a strategy that he calls "inimical to the well-being of politics in the country.") After dinner, Hiatt recalls, Clinton "stroked the fat cats," asking each donor for his thoughts, and obligingly taking notes.

Such social affirmation is the goal of most big Democratic donors, the former Obama adviser says: "Usually, it's not about favors. They want the chief of staff calling to get their opinion. Or they want to say, when they are out in the Hamptons, that they were just talking with the President."

But Obama still rarely calls donors. One fund-raiser estimates that even now, at the height of the election season, he probably makes only a few such calls a month. Chicago supporters who have raised money for him for years say that it's just how he is.

A Chicago donor, who has attended events at the White House, and describes the President as "unfailing courteous, warm, wonderful, and generous," notes that Obama has never called him. "He's more of an introspective guy than either Bill Clinton or George Bush," the donor says. "He's fantastic in small groups, but he's not the kind of guy I would go out and have a beer with. But, by the way, that's not my thing, either. I'm busy, and he's got more important things to do."

In addition to being less of a gladiator than most politicians, Obama is also the first President in a long time to have small children in the White House. Some Washingtonians have complained that Obama rarely goes out at night or socializes with members of Congress, preferring to spend time with his family. Jodi Kantor, in her book, points out that the President is unwilling to miss dinner with his family more than two nights a week. This doesn't leave much time for strategic socializing.

A few big donors, such as Robert

Wolf, a former top executive at UBS, have become genuine friends of Obama's. But, for a politician, Obama is unusually self-contained. In this regard, some have likened him to Jimmy Carter. Gerald Rafshoon, who was Carter's media adviser in the White House, agrees that Carter had little appetite for massaging donors or Washington power brokers. But, Rafshoon says, Robert Strauss, the former chairman of the Democratic Party, persuaded Carter to do it anyway: "Carter didn't like fund-raising, but he did it. He also knew he had to have dinner with senators like Russell Long. We also had thirty dinners in the residence for the press. It paid off." Perhaps, he suggests, Obama needs more advisers telling him, "This is necessary. Do it."

As Sheldon Adelson has shown, a single billionaire donor has the potential to make a critical difference in an American Presidential race. For this reason, there has been intense interest, on the Democratic side, in gauging the intentions of George Soros, who is ranked seventh on *Forbes*'s list of the wealthiest Americans. Over the past thirty years, no benefactor has contributed more to liberal causes. Campaign donations have been a small part of his philanthropy, but in 2008, four years after he made his record campaign donations, he gave five million dollars to help elect Barack Obama. This kept expectations high for 2012.

Soros declined to comment for this ar-



ticle. But several people familiar with his thinking suggest that Soros—who was born in Hungary, and who has made his fortune in global investments—is currently preoccupied with other issues, such as the fate of the European Union, and is not inclined to take an outsized role in the 2012 Presidential campaign. As an advocate for greater government transparency, he is reportedly uncomfortable with the burgeoning role that secret donations now play in U.S. elections. In addition,

confidants say that, although he still supports Obama, Soros has been disappointed by him, both politically and personally. Small slights can loom large with wealthy donors. When Soros wanted to meet with Obama in Washington to discuss global economic problems, Obama's staff failed to respond. Eventually, they arranged not a White House interview but, rather, a low-profile, private meeting in New York, when the President was in town for other business. Soros found this back-door treatment confounding. "He feels hurt," a Democratic donor says.

"They pissed on him," a confidant says. "He didn't want a fucking thing! He didn't want a state dinner, or a White House party—he just wanted to be taken seriously."

A second Soros confidant has a different view. Although he acknowledges that Soros might have contributed far more money to Obama if the Administration had engaged with him more intently, he said, "Part of me respects Obama for not spending more time with him. This President doesn't want to spend a lot of time with donors. You have to admire that."

Still, some critics suggest that the failure to tap Soros shows that the Democrats are no match for the Republican money machine that conservatives began building in 2010. "We just don't have a Karl Rove type—we need a political celebrity," a top fund-raiser for Obama says. Priorities USA is headed by two former White House aides, Bill Burton and Sean Sweeney. "The guys running Priorities are very good at politics, but they have zero fund-raising experience," the Obama fund-raiser says. "Fund-raising is all about relationships." After a rough start, Priorities USA has hired several more experienced fund-raisers, and done better. But one of those veterans says, "It's the hardest thing I've ever done."

There are essentially three deep wells of Democratic cash in the country: New York, Los Angeles, and Silicon Valley. So far, the high-tech industry has not contributed large sums to Obama. Some prominent Democrats, such as Chris Hughes—a co-founder of Facebook who helped manage Obama's Web strategy in 2008—have devoted themselves to campaign-finance reform



instead. Hughes and his husband, Sean Eldridge, have decided not to give money to any Super PACs, and to match any donations they make to candidates with donations to groups working to diminish the role of money in politics. Asked about Obama's reluctance to court the extremely wealthy, Hughes described it as "a virtue."

John Emerson, the Democratic National Committee's Southern California finance co-chair, says that many tech barons have "a distaste for Super PACs—they don't want to spend on thirty-second ads. There's a sense that there's something wrong with that process. Instead, you see people very involved in specific issues. So Tom Steyer—a billionaire hedge-fund manager in San Francisco—"almost single-handedly defeated an initiative that would have gutted auto-emission standards in California. And Jeff Bezos is putting money into supporting same-sex marriage." (Bezos, the founder of Amazon, has given \$2.5 million to a gay-marriage campaign in Washington State.)

So far, Obama's most notable support has come from Hollywood. Jeffrey Katzenberg, the C.E.O. of DreamWorks Animation, has given one of the largest donations to pro-Obama Super PACs: two million dollars. The actor Morgan Freeman and the comedian Bill Maher have each given a million dollars to Priorities USA. The difference in temperament between Clinton and Obama is felt particularly keenly in Hollywood, however. Donna Bojarsky, a political adviser to the entertainment community, says, "Clinton is a voracious consumer of popular culture, and he loved California." A California fund-raiser says, "Clinton was so good, it raised the bar." Democratic operatives in the state recall that Clinton habitually called them before flying out, to catch up on gossip and learn whom he needed to see. The Obama entourage is all business: donors are rarely invited to fly on Air Force One or ride in the President's car. The personal touch is missed. As the California fund-raiser puts it, "Ego is a big part of the business out here."

Katzenberg has been invited to a state dinner at the White House, but he has never met privately with the President. "One of the things we so love about this President is his integrity, and his attempts

to bring new ethics to Washington," the fund-raiser says. "But it makes our job harder."

Obama's relationship with people in the finance industry, meanwhile, remains badly strained. "We lost Wall Street," a Democratic fund-raiser acknowledges. "They think they're so important, the driving force behind the country. . . . Their view of the White House is 'How dare they?'" Donors at financial firms currently account for eight of Romney's top ten sources of campaign funds. None of Obama's top ten sources of cash are financial firms. The change from 2008 is dramatic: four years ago, as Bloomberg News reported, seventy-five per cent of the campaign donations given by employees of Goldman Sachs went to Obama and the Democrats. This year, the ratio has been nearly reversed, with Democrats collecting just thirty per cent of the Goldman contributions.

Given the huge fortune that Romney accumulated in the private-equity business, the promises that he has made to lower taxes on capital gains, and his refusal to commit to ending tax advantages for hedge funds, his appeal to Wall Street executives is not surprising, Axelrod says: "Romney's basic pitch to the financial people is 'I am you! I'm your guardian! I will protect your interests! I won't touch carried interest. I'll repeal Dodd-Frank'—the Wall Street regulations that were passed after the 2008 financial crisis. "That's obviously going to find an audience with some of these folks."

It is an article of faith among some Democrats that liberals give money to politicians for altruistic reasons, whereas Republicans make campaign contributions as self-serving investments, in order to protect future profits. "It's a business expense for them," Axelrod says. "They'll make it back in no time." Jonathan Collegio, the spokesman for American Crossroads, the Republican Super PAC, dismisses such thinking as "puerile," arguing that there are no more "nefarious motivations" behind Republican donors than there are behind Democratic donors, which include major unions promoting their members' economic interests.

Yet Tom Perriello, a former Democratic congressman from Virginia who was defeated in 2010 after a flood of outside conservative spending in his district,

and who now focusses on campaign-finance issues at the liberal Center for American Progress, argues that the economic incentives for wealthy conservatives are far more obvious. He says of Sheldon Adelson, "He's got billions he could get back on the overseas-investment tax and the estate tax," both of which Romney has pledged to abolish. Moreover, Adelson's company, Las Vegas Sands Corporation, is currently the focus of two Justice Department investigations. The first is looking into possible violations of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, centering on the company's casinos in Macau. The second investigation, a joint probe with the Securities and Exchange Commission, concerns possible violations of anti-bribery laws. The future leadership of the Justice Department and the S.E.C., then, is of enormous material interest to Adelson.

Similarly, Perriello says, "Oil, coal, and chemical companies also have billions at stake." He contends, "They're not giving money just to elect Romney—they're doing so on a platform of bashing clean energy. Why are there no Republican candidates willing to acknowledge climate change now?" The answer, he suggests, is that huge fossil-fuel companies, like the privately owned Koch Industries, are pouring millions of dollars into electing candidates who will further their agenda. A consortium of conservatives led by the Koch brothers has reportedly pledged to raise and spend four hundred million dollars before November.

"What candidate would buck them?" Perriello asks. "We've gone from a couple of billionaires on both sides to a kind of giving that shatters the social contract."

As an incumbent, Obama has intrinsic advantages when it comes to withstanding the tide of money from wealthy individuals. But, looking ahead, many Democrats grow more concerned. Bill Burton, the former White House aide who is now running Priorities USA, says, "My worry is that the numbers will just get even more astronomical. It could easily be doubled, or quadrupled, by 2016. Once big business realizes it can purchase the White House, you have to wonder what the limit is." ♦

# LOSE THAT FAT WITH THE CURSING MOMMY

BY IAN FRAZIER

**L**ike many of us, the Cursing Mommy could stand to shed a surplus pound or two. Why not admit it? It is no shame, nor must we undergo an impossible slog to achieve the healthy weight and body image we desire. All that's required is some old-fashioned grit 'n' determination, topped off by up-to-date creative thinking.

Now, in the "Who would've guessed?" department, I recently learned a fascinating fact: people who are trying to lose weight sometimes employ the assistance of specially trained dogs. (I had not known that!) These "weight-reduction dogs," as they are called, help the dieter to stay on his or her plan by encouraging good eating habits, countering bad ones, and providing positive reinforcement through companionship and discipline. What a super idea! With the help of weight-reduction dogs, many participants in the program have dropped twice the pounds in half the time, according to the Web site.

As most of you know, the Cursing Mommy often provides help for consumers by testing household products and services. So, with that goal in mind, the Cursing Mommy has rented a weight-reduction dog for the day. I picked up this cute beagle-Samoyed-pit-bull mix, Boris, at a weight-reduction-dog center this morning. (Apparently, mixed breeds are preferred for this kind of work.) Before bringing Boris into the house, I shut the cats in the basement and prepared a typical diet menu, plus some yummy, yucky, non-diet foods, to see how the pooch performs. So here goes:

Hello, Boris, are you ready? He responds with a cheerful wag of his tail, so I guess we can begin.

## *The Cursing Mommy Weight-Reduction Dog Test, Part I: Breakfast*

At one end of the dining-room table, I have laid out a healthy breakfast of

one-half cup of oatmeal with three ounces of nonfat milk, an eight-ounce glass of tomato juice, and one-third of a banana. As I start to eat the oatmeal—my goodness! Boris is practically cheering as I force down the wholesome but rather unpalatable (to be candid) food. He rubs his head against my knee and seems to grin with approval. Amazing!



At the other end of the table, for contrast, I have laid out a non-recommended breakfast, consisting of a large, heavily frosted cinnamon roll from a fast-food place and a twelve-ounce cappuccino with whipped cream and three packets of sugar. I sit down, put my napkin on my lap—the ever-watchful dog starts to growl—and reach for the cinnamon roll. As I lift it from the plate—HEY!—the dog leaps up and snatches it with his teeth right out of my hands! Holy moly! Incredible. Boris is now gobbling the roll on the floor, making quite a mess and growling and snapping his jaws. O.K., very impressive. Now I think I'll have a sip of the cappuccino and—wow! That was fast! Boris hopped up on his hind legs, knocked the cup away with his paws, and is now slurping up the spilled

liquid on the floor, along with the crumbs of the cinnamon roll. He has certainly done his job, and I am beginning to understand why the dog himself is actually pretty fat.

All right, I will put the milk back in the refrigerator. WHOA! The dog is leaping in front of me! He won't let me near the refrigerator; he's baring vicious-looking teeth. Listen, Boris, I'm not trying to get something more to eat; I just want to put this milk away. YIKES! He nipped my foot! Listen, you crazy dog, get back! I just want to put this—Hey, wait! He bumped the refrigerator door open with his head and is eating the chicken casserole from last night! Hey, I made that casserole with low-fat sour cream, you stupid—Get out of there! Now he's scarfing down some bacon, package and all! GET OUT OF THERE, YOU GODDAM MUTT! O.K., that does it. I'm taking you back. I get my car keys from the holder on the wall, and WHAT IN TH—The dog grabs the keys with his teeth right out of my hand! I hate to curse at a dumb animal, but COME BACK HERE, YOU FUCKING GODDAM BEAST! I'LL FUCKING STRANGLE YOU WHEN I CATCH YOU!! GIMME BACK MY FUCKING CAR KEYS!! Oh, no! The cats have somehow got loose! Chasing after them with my keys still in his mouth, the rotten creature jumps on a bookshelf and knocks over a vase and... AH!!! Now I've tripped on the coffee table! I'm skidding on the goddam floor straight into a box of Larry's goddam capacitors! FUCKING GODDAM WEIGHT-REDUCTION DOG!! STUPID FUCKING LARRY AND HIS GODDAM CAPACITORS!! FUCKING CATS!! GODDAM STUPID FUCKING SCALIA HALLIBURTON CHENEY GODDAM FUCKING STUPID FUCKING EVERYTHING!!!

[Pause.]

I think the goddam dog has gone to sleep on top of the bookshelf. I just heard a snore. He *should* sleep, after the amount he ate. In just a minute, I'm going to get up and call the rental place to come and get him. "Weight-reduction dog"—what a joke. Let him keep the car keys, for all I care. I am not going near that animal again.

Oh, what a fucking horrible day this has been. ♦

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## PROFILES

# STRING THEORIST

*Christian Tetzlaff rethinks how a violin should sound.*

BY JEREMY EICHLER



*"Beauty is the enemy of expression!" Tetzlaff says. Photograph by Christaan Felber.*

One day in December, 2010, the German violinist Christian Tetzlaff began rehearsals with an ensemble of young musicians at Carnegie Hall. The piece was György Ligeti's iridescent Violin Concerto, a complex score of disorienting beauty, completed in 1993, in which the soloist often plays a cadenza of his own invention. Tetzlaff frequently performs the work, and has devised a brief fantasy on the concerto's themes; at a certain point, he echoes one of Ligeti's wispily haunting woodwind melodies by mimicking the sound of a pan flute on his violin.

Tetzlaff plays on a modern violin, made by the Bonn-based luthier Stefan-Peter Greiner, which can produce an unusually wide range of tones, from the refined to the wild. That versatility suits Tetzlaff, because he rejects the facile association of classical music with Old World elegance, or what he calls "the cliché of the Stradivarius." A compact man with close-cropped blond hair, a refined nose, and the streamlined build of a gymnast, he often plays with his upper body bouncing, in dancelike mo-

tions, or tossing like a palm tree in a hurricane.

When, at the rehearsal, he arrived at the pan-flute moment in the cadenza for the first time, virtually every member of the orchestra turned his way in surprise. Tetzlaff was drawing his bow, at lightning speed, over a precise point on the fingerboard, unlocking strange and ghostly resonances. He had produced a violin color that the other musicians didn't know existed, and his imitation of a wind instrument was uncanny. The English conductor Simon Rattle, who was leading the rehearsal, told me, "It wasn't as if everyone was thinking, Oh, what a beautiful color. We were all thinking exactly the same thing—*That* is a pan flute."

Since the time of Paganini, violin virtuosos have tried to overwhelm audiences with feats of agility. Tetzlaff is after something different. A character actor in a field of matinée idols, he prefers to disappear into the sound world he creates onstage. "You become the thing," he says. "Or that's the hope." The Finnish conductor Esa-Pekka Sa-

lonen, with whom Tetzlaff has worked for more than two decades, says, "What always strikes me when I hear him playing, and when I work with him myself, is that it's not about the violin. It's about music being realized, and abstraction becoming reality, *through* the violin. He happens to play it extremely well, but that's not the point."

Tetzlaff began cying Ligeti's Violin Concerto in the mid-nineteen-nineties, when the first soloist's exclusive rights to the piece were about to expire. When he obtained the printed music, however, he noticed some puzzling conflicts between the published solo part and Ligeti's handwritten full score. Ligeti, a severe Hungarian who died in 2006, had revised the work after the first soloist informed him that the piece was unplayable. But for Tetzlaff the earlier version was not only playable but more effective, so he obtained Ligeti's permission to perform the original.

Tetzlaff came to see the piece as a Janus-faced score, shifting between an older, Bartókian longing for homeland and an avant-gardist's fierce exploratory zeal. He expressed this view to the German press around the time of his first European performances of the piece, in 1999. Not long afterward, a plain postcard appeared in the mail:

Dear Mr. Tetzlaff,

I've read your interview and feel very close to you. Not only do you play my concerto PERFECTLY but you talk about it with so much understanding and compassion. For a living composer it is the most beautiful thing to be so understood by an interpreter.

Warmly, György Ligeti

Most players would frame such a note, but when I visited Tetzlaff last year at his home, outside Frankfurt, he had trouble locating it among his papers. The most prominent thing on the walls of his small second-floor practice room is music itself—choice measures from Schumann's "Dichterliebe," taken from manuscript facsimiles and placed inside discreet frames.

For many years, Tetzlaff, who is forty-six, performed wearing wire-rimmed glasses of the Trotsky-Mahler variety, which fuelled his reputation as an ascetic intellectual. (He now wears contact lenses.) He carries himself in public with cool North German reserve, speaks precise, lightly accented English,

and quotes Nietzsche and eighteenth-century violin treatises with equally intimidating fluency. He owns very few recordings of other violinists, finding more inspiration in the score itself, especially since a soloist's determination to dazzle, he believes, often trumps the composer's stated wishes. (He cites, for instance, the habit among soloists of ignoring Tchaikovsky's request that a mute be used during the slow movement of his Violin Concerto.)

Yet the image of Tetzlaff as a crisp and imperiously cerebral soloist grows more complicated when you watch him perform. For much of the 2010-11 season, a huge photograph mounted above the entrance to Carnegie Hall showed him playing with his eyes closed, eyebrows arching skyward in a look of rapture not far from tears. When he plays, the lines on his face can suddenly soften, as if a protective mask had been removed. Sometimes, he attacks the music with a vehemence that seems almost surreally at odds with his offstage restraint. The pianist Lars Vogt, a friend and frequent collaborator, says, "There's hardly anybody I know who knows so much about music but who is also at the same time such an intuitive and *wild* musician, who comes at it directly from the stomach."

These days, Tetzlaff plays more than a hundred concerts a year, in Europe, North America, and the Far East. He appears with most of the top orchestras, and is capable of flooring critics even with familiar masterworks, which remain at the heart of his repertoire. ("The most extraordinarily intense and dramatic rendition of this great piece I have heard," Ivan Hewett wrote, in the London *Daily Telegraph*, after Tetzlaff performed the Brahms Violin Concerto at the 2011 Proms.) Musicians express similar enthusiasm, with less formality. After a chamber concert in Amherst, Massachusetts, last year, the young piano soloist Gilles Vonsattel whispered to me, "That was *fucking amazing*."

Nevertheless, Tetzlaff remains unknown to most casual concertgoers. In addition to avoiding flamboyance, he does not tailor his recitals for the sake of the box office, and his seriousness can turn off those seeking lighter pleasures

from a concert. Although he records regularly, he does not have a major label behind him. Most important, he refuses to embrace what might be called the School of the Big Tone: the broad, velvety sound, sustained with uniformly wide vibrato, that many listeners in the age of Itzhak Perlman have come to think is how a violin should sound. "Tetzlaff's palette extends to harsh or crushed tones, even to sounds that he has purposefully leached of color. An older French musician of my acquaintance dislikes Tetzlaff's playing precisely because such ugliness is allowed in the door. Critics, too, occasionally balk. Reviewing a recent album of Schumann Trios in the *Guardian*, Andrew Clements wrote, "What isn't conveyed, though, is any sense of involvement or affection for the music."

For Tetzlaff, a degree of distance can at times be deliberate. He believes that too much prettiness limits a piece's narrative potential. "The listener loses the ear for the most beautiful sounds if they've been used for arbitrary, non-important things," he says. As he once told a roomful of students, with mock severity, "Beauty is the enemy of expression!"

That's not a phrase that makes great marketing copy. Yet Tetzlaff's uncompromising attitude has served him well in the past decade, as too many celebrity soloists have coasted on their reputations, and the crossover star David Garrett has played Pachelbel alongside Metallica. At a time when the modern conservatory system has rendered technical virtuosity a commonplace, Tetzlaff is distinguished by his deep musical empathy—his ability to open a window onto a composer's inner life.

Tetzlaff is not a religious man, but he describes his art in frankly spiritual terms. Performing music, he says, "is the job that has the most to do with the belief in the existence of a soul. I deal in Berg's soul, in Brahms's soul—that's my job. And, you can challenge me, but I find that *music* is humans' most advanced achievement, more so than painting and writing, because it's more mysterious, more magical, and it acts in such a direct way. Trying to turn lead into gold is nothing compared to taking something mechanical like an instru-



ment—a string and a bow—and using it to evoke a human soul, preserved through the centuries.”

One of Tetzlaff's earliest memories is of drifting off to sleep in his family home, in Hamburg, as his parents, both amateur musicians, rehearsed with a chamber choir late into the night, motets of Schütz, Bach, and Brahms floating up the stairs into his darkened room.

For both his mother and his father, singing filled a void. They were young children during the Second World War. His mother has memories of running through the streets of Potsdam to reach her home during air raids, and she lost her father in the German Army. Tetzlaff's father was born in Stettin (now Szczecin, Poland), and, after the war, his family trekked westward, through cities of rubble, before arriving in Hamburg. Tetzlaff's parents met there, in a church choir. “They bravely went their way and suppressed a lot of things,” Tetzlaff told me. “But with music, of course, you can let go.”

Tetzlaff's father became a Lutheran minister. As a boy, every other Sunday Tetzlaff listened to his father's sermon and performed music in the church service with his three siblings, all of whom became professional musicians. His older sister, Angela, teaches flute at the conservatory in Lübeck; his older brother, Stephan, is the music director of the State Theatre of Bremerhaven; and his younger sister, Tanja, is a cellist with whom he plays in a string quartet.

Tetzlaff started playing the violin when he was six years old, and showed great talent, but he was not pushed to perform high-profile concerts at a young age. He recalls years of practicing less than half an hour a day and often letting his mind wander, memorizing pieces and then playing them while simultaneously reading paperback adventures by the German writer Karl May, many of them set in an imagined Wild West. When Tetzlaff was ten, his parents gave him a two-volume biographical dictionary that surveyed the lives of the great composers. It became a kind of portal. “This was the book I read over and over,” he told me. “I really felt so in tune with them—I knew all the dates of their

lives, what they had been doing, where they had been. They were always my heroes, creating something fantastic against all odds, and against their real life.”

The violinist Heime Müller, a childhood friend and a co-founder of the Artemis String Quartet, remembers hearing Tetzlaff play at this age. “I had never heard anybody sink into the music like that,” Müller told me. Around this time, Tetzlaff sight-read the major



violin concertos with his brother, Stephan, at the piano and decided that he would become a soloist. “It was just something I thought would be right,” he recalls.

This slow-brewed approach to a soloist career is hardly the norm. At the age of thirteen, the German violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, who is three years Tetzlaff's senior, performed with the Berlin Philharmonic. At that age, Tetzlaff was playing soccer and taking long breaks from practicing solo repertoire in order to perform in a youth orchestra, losing himself in the oceanic symphonies of Bruckner, Brahms, Sibelius, and Mahler. When he turned fourteen, his parents found a new teacher for him, Uwe-Martin Haiberg, the concertmaster of the North German Radio Symphony Orchestra, who told me that he was overwhelmed by Tetzlaff's talent and hesitant to take him on. He described Tetzlaff as a “beautiful and friendly” boy who had already read the complete works of Thomas Mann. (Tetzlaff insists that he was still reading Tolkien at that age, and that his Mann obsession came two years later.) Haiberg found himself cramming before their lessons, studying the music Tetzlaff was learning. “He soaked it all up like a sponge,” Haiberg recalls.

During his student years, Tetzlaff tried composition, an experiment that yielded no inspired results but instilled

in him a profound respect for the creative process. “Many of us can maybe sometimes imagine sounds, or have some musical ideas,” he told me. “But to have them consistently building whole works, and to have the means of transforming something that's in your ear into handcrafted written notes that give back what you heard and what you felt—I find it just utterly miraculous.”

At eighteen, Tetzlaff placed second in a major German competition, earning himself professional management and, potentially, the start of a concert career. Instead, he headed for Cincinnati, to study with his teacher's teacher, the violinist Walter Levin. Most players came to Levin intending to study flashy Romantic works, but Tetzlaff took an interest in the prickly violin concerto of Arnold Schoenberg, a piece that was almost never performed at the time. Then, as now, Tetzlaff could not understand the prejudice that many listeners hold against dissonant twentieth-century music, or the tendency to see it as an abrupt break with music's expressive past. As he put it to me, “Emotionally, why would anybody think that all of a sudden humans were less human?”

Toward the end of his student days, Tetzlaff auditioned for two eminent conductors—Sergiu Celibidache, in Munich, and Christoph von Dohnányi, in Cleveland—by playing the Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto. The auditions went well, but both men spotted on Tetzlaff's list of repertoire the far knottier Schoenberg Concerto, and both engaged him to perform it in major concerts. He was twenty-two.

At the time, it was unheard of for a young violinist to play the Schoenberg for his American debut. In Cleveland, the critic Donald Rosenberg wrote that Tetzlaff's performance “almost overshadowed” the rest of the program. Another critic, Wilma Salishury, presumably unaware of his original audition piece, wrote that Tetzlaff played Schoenberg's “dissonant themes as though they were melodious tunes by Tchaikovsky.” Bravos broke out after the final chord, many of them from members of the orchestra.

Tetzlaff is still occasionally asked to perform the Schoenberg Concerto, and Esa-Pekka Salonen credits him with re-

launching the work into the repertoire. "It had this strange reputation—considered to be unplayable and unlistenable, almost like a failure," Salonen told me. "But, when he started playing it, all of a sudden it became *music*."

Playing the violin is physically taxing, and the index finger of Tetzlaff's right hand has been warped rightward after years of applying pressure to the stick of the bow. Many soloists have been similarly marked by their profession. But the fingers on Tetzlaff's left hand have a story all their own.

I first met Tetzlaff in 2005, the morning after he gave a recital with Lars Vogt at the Kimmel Center, in Philadelphia. Tetzlaff's playing of the Brahms G-Major Violin Sonata had been so fluid that I was surprised when he told me it had been delivered in acute pain. Since the late nineties, he has suffered intermittently from a form of neurodermatitis that causes the skin on his fingers to become severely dry, especially in colder temperatures. If the symptoms occur while he is playing, he is forced to press harder on the fingerboard to retain the necessary traction, essentially cutting into his fingers with the metal strings.

The pain became so extreme that, in 2002, he began covering the index finger of his left hand with the cut-off fingertip of a cotton glove, fastened with tape at his first knuckle. He used these makeshift cotton thimbles in performance for a year, even while recording the Sibelius Violin Concerto, for Virgin Classics—a concession that might be compared to an Olympic sprinter, in search of ankle support, choosing to compete in hiking boots. Tetzlaff feared that his career was over. "I was on the edge and feeling desperate," he told me, in 2005. "I couldn't go on playing this way."

Eventually, Tetzlaff figured out how to treat his condition, using some unusual techniques. He discovered that practicing while riding an exercise bike helped his circulation, raised his body temperature, and reduced pain, with positive effects long afterward. He arranged for hotels to set up stationary bikes in his room. He also learned to request that house managers warm the concert hall, or at least turn off the air-

conditioning, during his performance. Before a concert, if he is worried about losing traction on the instrument, he will dip the fingertips of his left hand in honey.

Tetzlaff lives in Bad Homburg, a leafy suburb of Frankfurt, in a comfortable but not extravagant house that is set back on a quiet street. He is married to Diemut Schneider, a clarinetist who plays in the orchestra of the Frankfurt Opera and speaks with the singsong intonation of southern Germany. Schneider has a sunny disposition, and she and Tetzlaff seem to navigate his international career with stolid pragmatism. On travel days, if her rehearsal schedule allows, she gives him a lift to the airport in the family's Volkswagen minivan.

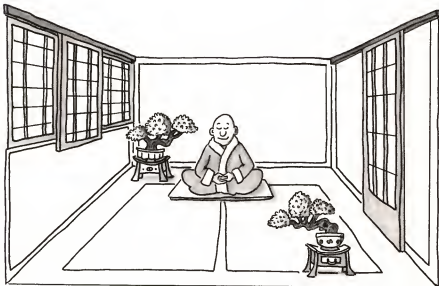
They first met in the country's National Youth Orchestra, when Tetzlaff was twelve years old and Schneider was fifteen. When he was twenty-five, they married and quickly started a family, just at the point that Tetzlaff was building his international career—a process that is less glamorous than it may appear. Typically, a violinist flies into town, rehearses twice with an orchestra, and performs for a few nights; then it's on to the next city. With three young children at home, Tetzlaff insisted that tours be no longer than ten days. He also perfected the art of the quick exit—walking offstage and heading directly to

the airport. Family life, he said, has provided him with emotional ballast: "Even if the concert didn't work out, I knew my life would not take a completely different turn."

Two of the Tetzlaff children—Marie and Simon, both teen-agers—still live at home and are highly musical, playing the oboe and the cello, respectively. (The older son, Leonard, is studying psychology at the University of Frankfurt.) When everyone is practicing at the same time, the Tetzlaff house takes on the beehive-like feel of a conservatory, but that doesn't happen very often. Tetzlaff typically practices less than an hour a day, which leaves him plenty of time to cook big family meals, sight-read chamber music, or play soccer, barefoot, in the back yard with the kids. Sitting at the dining-room table, he said, "When I'm here, the other life is basically gone."

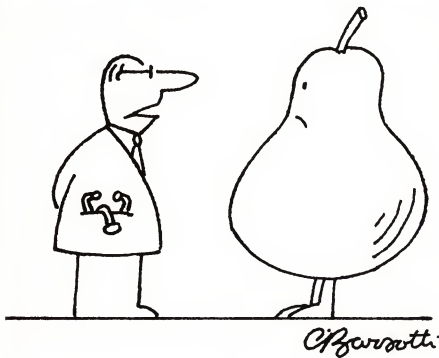
After a few days in Bad Homburg, I flew with Tetzlaff to Vienna, where he was scheduled to play Alban Berg's Violin Concerto with the San Francisco Symphony, which was on tour with its conductor, Michael Tilson Thomas. At the Frankfurt airport, Tetzlaff darted through the terminals with a slim rolling suitcase, his violin case lashed lengthwise to his back, in the manner of a diver's oxygen tank.

On the flight, while passengers around him dozed, he laid out his views



ZEN HOARDER

THOMPSON



*"Forget exercise—find another pear to love you."*

of the Berg—a piece written in 1935, the last year of the composer's life, and dedicated to the memory of Manon Gropius, the daughter of Alma Mahler and the architect Walter Gropius. Tetzlaff told me that this dedication is a "smoke screen"; it was Berg's own requiem. He holds the view that Berg laced the work with private memories, reminiscences of a clandestine love affair, and even a violent vision of death itself, during which the solo line leaps to a stratospherically high B, marked fortississimo, in a desperate cry for help.

Tetzlaff cited musicologists and paraphrased Berg's letters to his secret lover, Hanna Fuchs-Robettin, sprinkling in memorized details from the score with the detached rigor of a cryptologist. "Berg's number, of course, was twenty-three," he said. "Everything important in his life always happened on the twenty-third, or when he was twenty-three, or in connection with that number. His first asthma attack happened when he was twenty-three. It is actually composed in the Violin Concerto, in the last movement. At measure twenty-three."

Tetzlaff can pivot quickly from ab-

stract subjects to a much more personal register, and in the course of many discussions I began to wonder whether this tendency was connected to the years he'd spent performing music—responding, in real time, to calls for rapid shifts in emotion. On the plane, Tetzlaff allowed his theorizing to take an intimate turn when he explained that the secrets embedded in Berg's score were not intended for the listeners in the hall. They were there for the performer, whom Berg was addressing as a confidant. Interpretation, Tetzlaff believes, should ultimately be an act of compassion. "This concerto has always touched me," he said. "But the more I know about how Berg was really speaking from friend to friend about his own life, the more I'm enticed to try to be with him."

After landing in Vienna, Tetzlaff checked into a hotel, ate some schnitzel, and walked to the Konzerthaus, an imposing Art Nouveau building about five miles from the apartment where Berg lived for most of his life. It turned out that Tetzlaff had given more thought to the number twenty-three than to the matter of packing his concert suit pants. A replacement pair of trousers was hast-

ily borrowed from an usher of complementary size and sartorial leanings. At around eight o'clock, Tetzlaff, seemingly unruffled, walked onto the stage of the gilded Great Hall to assume his spot in front of the San Francisco Symphony. He bowed politely, and the music began.

It is ferociously difficult to become a professional violin soloist, but, once you have achieved the coveted spot at the front of the orchestra, a new set of rules applies. Because the most popular Romantic concertos are so beloved, and their basic effects are so indestructible, if a soloist can play the notes with a modicum of accuracy, a pleasing tone, and the appearance of conviction, an ovation is almost guaranteed. If he or she is a classical-music celebrity, or a prodigy, it is a certainty. Against this backdrop, to give a performance that takes risks, courts vulnerability, or offers an unusual interpretation can seem like an act of reckless overexertion.

Tetzlaff remains unseduced by low expectations. In Vienna, he unspooled the melancholy confessions of Berg's opening pages in long, meltingly tender lines. When the solo part touched on a Carinthian folk melody that may be a coded reference to the domestic servant who was Berg's first love, and with whom he secretly fathered a child as a teen-ager, Tetzlaff's tone darkened and deepened. When Berg's score slid toward atonal cataclysm, capped by the death moment, Tetzlaff repeatedly folded his torso, then snapped straight, tearing at his instrument with unchecked fury.

Haiberg, his former teacher, once told me, "This is the great mystery of Christian Tetzlaff. He can create a catastrophe on his violin where he has never known one in real life."

At one point, I asked Tetzlaff about this quality. "Some may see the tortured existence of the musician as one where he's practicing like hell and being alone," he said. "I see it quite differently. Having three children, beautiful as it is, burdens you with terrible things often, with strong decisions and sleepless nights. This is real life. And then, of course—this is getting into very personal things—I see many parts of me that are what would be called the 'dark side.' I had a happy childhood, but what

was happening in my family, my parents, and also the dark things that happened—between them and where they come from, the war—there is a lot that I could not put in easy words. But it's what most of us carry. It's just whether you have the ability to voice it in the music." Or maybe, he said, it just comes down to disposition—"whether you allow yourself to be touched by things, to be receptive to other people, to be in the pain of a composer."

When Tetzlaff took his bows in Vienna, the crowd seemed at once knocked off balance by the force of the Berg performance and relieved by the ritual comfort of applause. For an encore, Tetzlaff chose the tranquil Largo from Bach's C-Major Sonata for Solo Violin, and he played this wise, consolatory music with his eyes closed.

One of Tetzlaff's most striking technical gifts is an ability to project extremely soft sounds in a large hall; it's like whispering in a way so that two thousand people can still hear you. The feat involves subtle negotiations of bow speed, distribution, and pressure. The violinist Pamela Frank, who has known Tetzlaff since he was a teen-ager, told me, "Projection is one-third intellectual, one-third your soul, and one-third what you do with the right hand to spin those thoughts and feeling into sound." She added, "Christian is like a math genius of the bow."

Three measures before the end of his Bach encore, Tetzlaff tapered his sound down to a pianissimo so shiveringly soft and guileless that the massive hall appeared to shrink to the size of a chamber. I thought of something Tetzlaff had said earlier in the day: "I think that Bach wrote this movement for Berg."

Bach's solo sonatas and partitas, finished around 1720, stand at the heart of the violin literature. Studied by advanced players everywhere, they remain difficult to master: Bach's dense interweaving of multiple voices requires a single violin essentially to play beyond itself, to conjure a crowd. The six pieces add up to more than two hours of music, and are rarely tackled as a whole, but Tetzlaff has performed the full cycle widely, and recorded it twice. He sees the cycle as Bach's "personal prayer book."

Tetzlaff's mystical side comes out most strongly when he speaks of Bach. The violinist Isabel Trautwein, a friend and a former student of Tetzlaff's, recalls a lesson in which he amazed her by pointing out a series of hidden calligraphic details in Bach's manuscript. As the cycle progresses, the pen strokes that Bach used to form the letter "P" in the word "partita" gradually pull apart, until the lines of the "P" resemble his initials: "J.S." This paled, however, next to Tetzlaff's showstopper: he pointed out an apparent mistake on Bach's title page. Its two largest words are *Sei Solo*, usually translated as "Six Solos." Yet, in grammatically accurate Italian, Tetzlaff told her, the second word should be the plural, *Soli*. Or was it not a mistake? "The whole thing is a calligraphic masterpiece," Tetzlaff said, when I asked him about it. "And then for Bach to put *Sei Solo*, speaking Italian like an idiot? It just cannot be." Tetzlaff prefers the explanation that Bach had in mind a kind of spiritual double-entendre, since *Sei Solo* can also be rendered as "You are alone."

Shortly after the Berg performance in Vienna, I attended one of Tetzlaff's complete Bach performances, in Dresden. The concert took place in the Annenkirche, a medium-sized church near the city center, and I was surprised to find the space only about two-thirds full. More publicity no doubt would have helped, but billboards in town were aggressively promoting an appearance, six months later, of the genre-hopping celebrity violinist Nigel Kennedy.

The listeners who had turned out were enthusiastic and relatively young, and Tetzlaff seemed unperturbed by their modest numbers as he took his place at the front of the church. Previous generations of Bach interpreters have emphasized the music's steady Baroque symmetries and violinistic brilliance, but in Tetzlaff's hands Bach's faster movements leaped and swayed, as if recalling their past lives as dances. The slower movements were almost uncomfortably introverted, especially the monumental Chaconne of the D-Minor Partita. The scholar Helga Thoene has speculated that this movement was written just after Bach learned of the death of his first wife, and Tetzlaff's

playing seemed to settle the matter, as familiar chromatic melodies took on a hushed and grief-stricken quality, the vast set of arpeggiations spread out with tragic grandeur.

After the epic Chaconne, the next sonata, nominally a fresh start in C major, might seem like a chance to clear the air. Tetzlaff initially emphasized its harmonic strangeness, making it seem as if the music could not escape the Chaconne's dark gravitational pull. Then he broke free in the second movement, a fugue full of jubilant chords and athletic string-crossings. It was hot inside the church, and beads of sweat collected on the tip of Tetzlaff's nose, each one falling, with a little splash, onto his suit jacket.

A marathon Bach recital could easily try the endurance of people seated in hard pews, but the concertgoers in Dresden sat in rapt silence. I attributed this to a distinctive aspect of Tetzlaff's charisma. Onstage, many violin soloists adopt a confident swagger, but in Dresden Tetzlaff, as whenever he plays Bach, seemed to expose layer after layer of vulnerability, creating an atmosphere of naked confession.

"Bach's music confronts the player and the audience in a very personal situation, in a very alone way," he explained. "And I try at that moment to put away pretensions—in levels of violin playing, pretensions of being a strong man, of being invulnerable—and instead say, 'This is where all of us have common ground.' Most of the time, we try to tell ourselves 'I'm confident' or 'I'm doing well.' But then, in a moment alone at home, you feel how close you are to some kind of abyss."

He continued, "Music, even at terrible moments, can make you accept so much more—accept your dark sides, or the things that happen to you. Maybe it's just because you see that this is a common trait for all of us. You see that *we* are not alone." He said this with such quiet intensity that it seemed the opposite of sentimental. "And that's what the concert situation is about for me, when I'm sitting in the hall and also when I'm playing myself. It's about communication—I almost want to say 'communion.' As a player, you really don't interpret anymore. You listen, together, with the audience." ♦

## ALTERED STATES

*Self-experiments in chemistry.*

BY OLIVER SACKS

To live on a day-to-day basis is insufficient for human beings; we need to transcend, transport, escape; we need meaning, understanding, and explanation; we need to see over-all patterns in our lives. We need hope, the sense of a future. And we need freedom (or, at least, the illusion of freedom) to get beyond ourselves, whether with telescopes and microscopes and our ever-burgeoning technology, or in states of mind that allow us to travel to other worlds, to rise above our immediate surroundings.

We may seek, too, a relaxing of inhibitions that makes it easier to bond with each other, or transports that make our consciousness of time and mortality easier to bear. We seek a holiday from our inner and outer restrictions, a more intense sense of the here and now, the beauty and value of the world we live in.

Many of us find Wordsworthian "intimations of immortality" in nature, art, creative thinking, or religion; some people can reach transcendent states through meditation or similar trance-inducing techniques, or through prayer and spiritual exercises. But drugs offer a shortcut; they promise transcendence on demand. These shortcuts are possible because certain chemicals can directly stimulate many complex brain functions.

Every culture has found such chemical means of transcendence, and at some point the use of such intoxicants becomes institutionalized at a magical or sacramental level. The sacramental use of psychoactive plant substances has a long history and continues to the present day in various shamanic and religious rites around the world.

At a humbler level, drugs are used not so much to illuminate or expand or concentrate the mind but for the sense of pleasure and euphoria they can provide. Even the pioneer Mormons, forbidden to use tea or coffee, on their long march to

Utah found by the roadside a simple herb, Mormon tea, whose infusions refreshed and stimulated the weary pilgrims. This was ephedra, which contains ephedrine, chemically and pharmacologically akin to the amphetamines.

Many people experiment with drugs, hallucinogenic and otherwise, in their teen-age or college years. I did not try them until I was thirty and a neurology resident. This long virginity was not due to lack of interest. I had read the great classics—De Quincey's "Confessions of an English Opium Eater" and Baudelaire's "Artificial Paradises"—at school. I read about the French writer Théophile Gautier, who in 1845 paid a visit to the recently founded Club des Hashischins, in a quiet corner of the Île Saint-Louis. Hashish, in the form of a greenish paste, had recently been introduced from Algeria and was all the rage in Paris. At the salon, Gautier consumed a substantial piece of hash. At first, he felt nothing out of the ordinary, but soon, he wrote, "everything seemed larger, richer, more splendid," and then more specific changes occurred:

An enigmatic personage suddenly appeared before me. . . . His nose was bent like the beak of a bird, his green eyes, which he wiped frequently with a large handkerchief, were encircled with three brown rings, and caught in the knot of a high white starched collar was a visiting card which read: *Daucus-Carota, du Pot d'or*. . . . Little by little the salon was filled with extraordinary figures, such as are found only in the etchings of Callot or the aquatints of Goya; a pêle-mêle of rags and tatters, bestial and human shapes.

By the eighteen-nineties, Westerners were also beginning to sample mescal, or peyote, previously used only as a sacrament in certain Native American traditions. As a freshman at Oxford, free to roam the shelves of the Radcliffe Science Library, I read the first published accounts of mescal intoxication, including those of Havelock Ellis and Silas Weir Mitchell. They were primarily medical men, not

just literary ones, and this seemed to lend an extra weight and credibility to their descriptions. I was captivated by Mitchell's dry tone and his nonchalance about taking what was then an unknown drug with unknown effects.

At one point, Mitchell wrote in an 1896 article for the *British Medical Journal*, he took a fair portion of an extract made from mescal buttons and followed it up with an additional dose. Although he noted that his face was flushed, his pupils were dilated, and he had "a tendency to talk, and now and then . . . misplaced a word," he nevertheless went out on house calls and saw several patients. Afterward, following three further doses, he lay down quietly in a dark room, whereupon he experienced "an enchanted two hours," full of chromatic effects:

Delicate floating films of colour—usually delightful neutral purples and pinks. These came and went—now here, now there. Then an abrupt rush of countless points of white light swept across the field of view, as if the unseen millions of the Milky Way were to flow a sparkling river before the eye.

Unlike Mitchell, who had focussed on colored, geometric hallucinations, which he compared in part to those of migraine, Aldous Huxley, writing of mescaline in the nineteen-fifties, focussed on the transfiguration of the visual world, its investment with luminous, divine beauty and significance. He compared such drug experiences to those of great visionaries and artists, though also to the psychotic experiences of some schizophrenics. Both genius and madness, Huxley hinted, lay in these extreme states of mind—a thought not so different from those expressed by De Quincey, Coleridge, and Baudelaire in relation to their own ambiguous experiences with opium and hashish (and explored at length in Moreau's 1845 book "Hashish and Mental Illness"). I read Huxley's "The Doors of Perception" and "Heaven and Hell" when they came out, in the nineteen-fifties, and I was especially





excited by his speaking of the geography of the imagination and its ultimate realm—the “antipodes of the mind.”

I had done a great deal of reading, but I had no experiences of my own with such drugs until 1953, when my childhood friend Eric Korn came up to Oxford. We read excitedly about Albert Hofmann's discovery of LSD, and we ordered fifty micrograms of it from the manufacturer in Switzerland (it was still legal in the mid-fifties). Solemnly, even sacramentally, we divided it and took twenty-five micrograms each—not knowing what splendors or horrors awaited us—but, sadly, it had absolutely no effect on either of us. (We should have ordered five hundred micrograms, not fifty.)

By the time I qualified as a doctor, at the end of 1958, I knew I wanted to be a neurologist, to know how the brain embodied consciousness and self and to understand its amazing powers of perception, imagery, memory, and hallucination. A new orientation was entering neurology and psychiatry at that time; it was the opening of a neurochemical age, with a glimpse of the range of chemical agents, neurotransmitters, which allowed nerve cells and different parts of the nervous system to communicate with one another. In the nineteen-fifties and sixties, discoveries were coming from all directions, though it was far from clear how they fitted together. It had been found, for in-

stance, that the parkinsonian brain was low in dopamine, and that giving a dopamine precursor, L-dopa, could alleviate the symptoms of Parkinson's disease; while tranquilizers, introduced in the early nineteen-fifties, could depress dopamine and cause a sort of chemical parkinsonism. For about a century, the staple medication for parkinsonism had been anticholinergic drugs. How did the dopamine and the acetylcholine systems interact? Why did opiates—or cannabis—have such strong effects? Did the brain have special opiate receptors and make opioids of its own? Was there a similar mechanism for cannabis receptors and cannabinoids? Why was LSD so enormously potent? Were all its effects explainable in terms of altering the serotonin in the brain? What transmitter systems governed wake-sleep cycles, and what might be the neurochemical background of dreams or hallucinations?

Starting a residency in 1962, I found the atmosphere heady with such questions. Neurochemistry was plainly “in,” and so—dangerously, seductively, especially in California, where I was studying—were the drugs themselves.

I started with cannabis. A friend in Topanga Canyon, where I lived at the time, offered me a joint; I took two puffs and was transfixed by what happened then. I gazed at my hand, and it seemed to fill my visual field, getting larger and

larger while at the same time moving away from me. Finally, it seemed to me, I could see a hand stretched across the universe, light-years or parsecs in length. It still looked like a living, human hand, yet this cosmic hand somehow also seemed like the hand of God. My first pot experience was marked by a mixture of the neurological and the divine.

On the West Coast in the early nineteen-sixties, LSD and morning-glory seeds were readily available, so I sampled those, too. “But if you want a really far-out experience,” my friends on Muscle Beach told me, “try Artane.” I found this surprising, for I knew that Artane, a synthetic drug allied to belladonna, was used in modest doses (two or three tablets a day) for the treatment of Parkinson's disease, and that such drugs, in large quantities, could cause a delirium. (Such deliriums have long been observed with accidental ingestion of plants like deadly nightshade, thornapple, and black henbane.) But would a delirium be fun? Or informative? Would one be in a position to observe the aberrant functioning of one's brain—to appreciate its wonder? “Go on,” my friends urged. “Just take twenty of them—you'll still be in partial control.”

So one Sunday morning I counted out twenty pills, swallowed them with a mouthful of water, and sat down to await the effect. Would the world be transformed, newborn, as Huxley described in “The Doors of Perception,” and as I myself had experienced with mescaline and LSD? Would there be waves of delicious, voluptuous feeling? Would there be anxiety, disorganization, paranoia? I was prepared for all of these, but none of them occurred. I had a dry mouth and large pupils, and found it difficult to read, but that was all. There were no psychic effects whatever—most disappointing. I did not know exactly what I expected, but I expected something.

I was in the kitchen, putting on a kettle for tea, when I heard a knocking at my front door. It was my friends Jim and Kathy; they often dropped round on a Sunday morning. “Come in, door's open,” I called out, and as they settled themselves in the living room I asked, “How do you like your eggs?” Jim liked them sunny side up, he said. Kathy preferred them over easy. We chatted away while I sizzled their ham and eggs—there were low swinging doors between the kitchen and



Karin

“Whoa, whoa, whoa, lady, can't you read?”

the living room, so we could hear each other easily. Then, five minutes later, I shouted, "Everything's ready," put their ham and eggs on a tray, walked into the living room—and found it empty. No Jim, no Kathy, no sign that they had ever been there. I was so staggered I almost dropped the tray.

It had not occurred to me for an instant that Jim and Kathy's voices, their "presences," were unreal, hallucinatory. We had had a friendly, ordinary conversation, just as we usually had. Their voices were the same as always—there was no hint, until I opened the swinging doors and found the living room empty, that the whole conversation, at least their side of it, had been invented by my brain.

I was not only shocked but rather frightened, too. With LSD and other drugs, I knew what was happening. The world would look different, feel different, there would be every characteristic of a special, extreme mode of experience. But my "conversation" with Jim and Kathy had no special quality; it was entirely commonplace, with nothing to mark it as a hallucination. I thought about schizophrenics conversing with their "voices," but typically the voices of schizophrenia are mocking or accusing, not talking about ham and eggs and the weather.

"Careful, Oliver," I said to myself. "Take yourself in hand. Don't let this happen again." Sunk in thought, I slowly ate my ham and eggs (Jim and Kathy's, too) and then decided to go down to the beach, where I would see the real Jim and Kathy and all my friends, and enjoy a swim and an idle afternoon.

I was pondering all this when I became conscious of a whirling noise above me. It puzzled me for a moment, and then I realized that it was a helicopter preparing to descend, and that it contained my parents, who, wanting to make a surprise visit, had flown in from London and, arriving in Los Angeles, had chartered a helicopter to bring them to Topanga Canyon. I rushed into the bathroom, had a quick shower, and put on a clean shirt and pants—the most I could do in the three or four minutes before they arrived. The throb of the engine was almost deafeningly loud, so I knew that the helicopter must have landed on the flat rock beside my house. I raced out, excitedly, to greet my parents—but the rock was empty, there was no helicopter in sight, and the huge pulsing noise of

its engine was abruptly cut off. The silence and emptiness, the disappointment, reduced me to tears. I had been so joyful, and now there was nothing at all.

I went back into the house and put on the kettle for another cup of tea, when my attention was caught by a spider on the kitchen wall. As I drew nearer to look at it, the spider called out, "Hello!" It did not seem at all strange to me that a spider should say hello (any more than it seemed strange to Alice when the White Rabbit spoke). I said, "Hello, yourself," and with this we started a conversation, mostly on rather technical matters of analytic philosophy. Perhaps this direction was suggested by the spider's opening comment: did I think that Bertrand Russell had exploded Frege's paradox? Or perhaps it was its voice—pointed, incisive, and just like Russell's voice, which I had heard on the radio. (Decades later, I mentioned the spider's Russellian tendencies to my friend Tom Eisner, an entomologist; he nodded sagely and said, "Yes, I know the species.")

During the week, I would avoid drugs, working as a resident at U.C.L.A.'s neurology department. I was amazed and moved, as I had been as a medical student in London, by the range of patients' neurological experiences, and I found that I could not comprehend these sufficiently, or come to terms with them emotionally, unless I attempted to describe or transcribe them. It was then that I wrote my first published papers and my first book (It was never published, because I lost the manuscript.)

But on the weekends I often experimented with drugs. I recall vividly one episode in which a magical color appeared to me. I had been taught, as a child, that there were seven colors in the spectrum, including indigo. (Newton had chosen these, somewhat arbitrarily, by analogy with the seven notes of the musical scale.) But few people agree on what "indigo" is.

I had long wanted to see "true" indigo, and thought that drugs might be the way to do this. So one sunny Saturday in 1964 I developed a pharmacologic launchpad consisting of a base of amphetamine (for general arousal), LSD (for hallucinogenic intensity), and a touch of cannabis (for a little added delirium). About twenty minutes after taking this, I faced a white wall and exclaimed, "I want to see indigo now—now!"

And then, as if thrown by a giant paintbrush, there appeared a huge, trembling, pear-shaped blob of the purest indigo. Luminous, numinous, it filled me with rapture: it was the color of heaven, the color, I thought, that Giotto spent a lifetime trying to get but never achieved—never achieved, perhaps, because the color of heaven is not to be seen on earth. But it existed once, I thought—it was the color of the Paleozoic sea, the color the ocean used to be. I leaned toward it in a sort of ecstasy. And then it suddenly disappeared, leaving me with an overwhelming sense of loss and sadness that it had been snatched away. But I consoled myself: yes, indigo exists, and it can be conjured up in the brain.

For months afterward, I searched for indigo. I turned over little stones and rocks near my house. I looked at specimens of azurite in the natural-history museum—but even that was infinitely far from the color I had seen. And then, in 1965, when I had moved to New York, I went to a concert at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In the first half, a Monteverdi piece was performed, and I was transported. I had taken no drugs, but I felt a glorious river of music, hundreds of years long, flowing from Monteverdi's mind into my own. In this ecstatic mood, I wandered out during the intermission and looked at the objects on display in the Egyptian galleries—lapis-lazuli amulets, jewelry, and so forth—and I was enchanted to see glints of indigo. I thought, Thank God, it really exists!

During the second half of the concert, I got a bit bored and restless, but I consoled myself, knowing that I could go out and take a "sip" of indigo afterward. It would be there, waiting for me. But, when I went out to look at the gallery after the concert was finished, I could see only blue and purple and mauve and puce—no indigo. That was forty-seven years ago, and I have never seen indigo again.

When a friend and colleague of my parents—Augusta Bonnard, a psychoanalyst—came to Los Angeles for a year's sabbatical in 1964, it was natural that we should meet. I invited her to my little house in Topanga Canyon, and we had a genial dinner together. Over coffee and cigarettes (Augusta was a chain-smoker; I wondered if she smoked even during analytic sessions), her tone

changed, and she said, in her gruff, smoke-thickened voice, "You need help, Oliver. You're in trouble."

"Nonsense," I replied. "I enjoy life. I have no complaints. All is well in work and love." Augusta let out a skeptical grunt, but did not push the matter further.

I had started taking LSD at this point, and if that was not available I would take morning-glory seeds instead. (This was before morning-glory seeds were treated with pesticide, as they are now, to prevent drug abuse.) Sunday mornings were usually my drug time, and it must have been two or three months after meeting Augusta that I took a hefty dose of Heavenly Blue morning-glory seeds. The seeds were jet black and of agate-like hardness, so I pulverized them with a mortar and pestle and then mixed them with vanilla ice cream. About twenty minutes after eating this, I felt an intense nausea, but when it subsided I found myself in a realm of paradisiacal stillness and beauty, a realm outside time, which was rudely broken into by a taxi grinding and backfiring its way up the steep trail to my house. An elderly woman got out of the taxi, and, galvanized into action, I ran toward her, shouting, "I know who you are—you are a replica of Augusta Bonnard! You look like her, you have her posture and movements, but you are not her. I am not deceived for a moment." Augusta raised her hands to her temples and said, "Oy! This is worse than I realized." She got back into the taxi, and took off without another word.

We had plenty to talk about the next time we met. My failure to recognize her, my seeing her as a "replica," she thought, was a complex form of defense, a dissociation that could only be called psychotic. I disagreed and maintained that my seeing her as a duplicate or impostor was neurological in origin, a disconnection between perception and feelings. The ability to identify (which was intact) was not accompanied by the appropriate feeling of warmth and familiarity, and it was this contradiction that led to the logical though absurd conclusion that she was a "duplicate." (This condition, which can occur in schizophrenia, but also with dementia or delirium, is known as Capgras syndrome.) Augusta said that, whichever view was correct, taking mind-altering drugs every weekend, alone, and in high doses, surely testified to some intense inner needs or conflicts, and that I should

## EDWARD HOPPER'S "II A.M.," 1926

She's naked yet wearing shoes.  
Wants to think *nude*. And happy in her body.

Though it's a fleshy aging body. And her posture in the chair—leaning forward, arms on knees, staring out the window—makes her belly bulge, but what the hell.

What the hell, *he* isn't here.

Lived in this damn drab apartment at Third Avenue, Twenty-third Street, Manhattan, how many damn years, has to be at least fifteen. Moved to the city from Hackensack, needing to breathe.

She'd never looked back. Sure they called her selfish, cruel. What the hell, the use they'd have made of her, she'd be sucked dry like bone marrow.

First job was file clerk at Trinity Trust. Wasted three years of her young life waiting for R.B. to leave his wife and wouldn't you think a smart girl like her would know better?

Second job also file clerk but then she'd been promoted to Mr. Castle's secretarial staff at Lyman Typewriters. The least the old bastard could do for her and she'd have done a lot better except for fat-face Stella Czech.

Third job, Tvek Realtors & Insurance and she's Mr. Tvek's private secretary: *What would I do without you, my dear one?*

As long as Tvek pays her decent. And *he* doesn't let her down like last Christmas, she'd wanted to die.

This damn room she hates. Dim-lit like a region of the soul into which light doesn't penetrate. Soft-shabby old furniture and sagging mattress like those bodies in dreams we feel but don't see. But she keeps her bed made every God-damned day, visitors or not.

*He* doesn't like disorder. *He* told her how he learned to make a proper bed in the U.S. Army in 1917.

explore these with a therapist. In retrospect, I am sure she was right, and I began seeing an analyst a year later.

The summer of 1965 was a sort of in-between time: I had completed my residency at U.C.L.A. and had left California, but I had three months ahead of me before taking up a research fellowship

in New York. This should have been a time of delicious freedom, a wonderful and needed holiday after the sixty- and sometimes eighty-hour work weeks I had had at U.C.L.A. But I did not feel free. When I am not working, I get unmoored, have a sense of emptiness and structurelessness. Weekends were the danger times, the drug times, when I lived in Califor-

The trick is, *he* says, you make the bed as soon as you get up.

Detaches himself from her as soon as it's over. Sticky skin, hairy legs, patches of scratchy hair on his shoulders, chest, belly. She'd like him to hold her and they could drift into sleep together but rarely this happens. Crazy wanting her, then abruptly it's over—*he's* inside his head, and *she's* inside hers.

Now this morning she's thinking God-damned bastard, this has got to be the last time. Waiting for him to call to explain why he hadn't come last night. And there's the chance he might come here before calling, which he has done more than once. *Couldn't keep away. God, I'm crazy for you.*

She's thinking she will give the bastard ten more minutes.

She's Jo Hopper with her plain redhead's face stretched on this fleshy female's face and *he's* the artist but also the lover and last week he came to take her out to Delmonico's but in this dim-lit room they'd made love in her bed and never got out until too late and she'd overheard him on the phone *explaining*—there's the sound of a man's voice *explaining to a wife* that is so callow, so craven, she's sick with contempt recalling. Yet *he* says he has left his family, he loves *her*.

Runs his hands over her body like a blind man trying to see. And the radiance in his face that's pitted and scarred, he needs her in the way a starving man needs food. *Die without you. Don't leave me.*

He'd told her it wasn't what she thought. Wasn't his family that kept him from loving her all he could but his life he'd never told anyone about in the war, in the infantry, in France. What crept like paralysis through him. Things that had happened to him, and things that he'd witnessed, and things that he'd perpetrated himself with his own hands. And she'd taken his hands and kissed them, and brought them against her breasts that were aching like the breasts of a young mother ravenous to give suck, and sustenance. And she said *No. That is your old life. I am your new life.*

She will give her new life five more minutes.

—Joyce Carol Oates

nia—and now an entire summer in my home town, London, stretched before me like a three-month-long weekend.

It was during this idle, mischievous time that I descended deeper into drug-taking, no longer confining it to weekends. I tried intravenous injection, which I had never done before. My parents, both physicians, were away, and, having the house to myself,

I decided to explore the drug cabinet in their surgery, on the ground floor of our house, for something special to celebrate my thirty-second birthday. I had never taken morphine or any opiates before. I used a large syringe—why bother with piddling doses? And, after settling myself comfortably in bed, I drew up the contents of several vials, plunged the needle into a

vein, and injected the morphine very slowly.

Within a minute or so, my attention was drawn to a sort of commotion on the sleeve of my dressing gown, which hung on the door. I gazed intently at this, and as I did so it resolved itself into a miniature but microscopically detailed battle scene. I could see silken tents of different colors, the largest of which was flying a royal pennant. There were gaily caparisoned horses, soldiers on horseback, their armor glinting in the sun, and men with longbows. I saw pipers with long silver pipes, raising these to their mouths, and then, very faintly, I heard their piping, too. I saw hundreds, thousands of men—two armies, two nations—preparing to do battle. I lost all sense of this being a spot on the sleeve of my dressing gown, or the fact that I was lying in bed, that I was in London, that it was 1965. Before shooting up the morphine, I had been reading Froissart's "Chronicles" and "Henry V," and now these became conflated in my hallucination. I realized that I was gazing at Agincourt, late in 1415, and looking down on the serried armies of England and France drawn up to do battle. And in the great pennanted tent, I knew, was Henry V himself. I had no sense that I was imagining or hallucinating any of this; what I saw was actual, real.

After a while, the scene started to fade, and I became dimly conscious, once more, that I was in London, stoned, hallucinating Agincourt on the sleeve of my dressing gown. It had been an enchanting and transporting experience, but now it was over. The drug effect was fading fast; Agincourt was hardly visible now. I glanced at my watch. I had injected the morphine at nine-thirty, and now it was ten. But I had a sense of something odd—it had been dusk when I took the morphine, it should now be darker still. But it was not. It was getting lighter, not darker, outside. It was ten, I now realized, but ten in the morning. I had been gazing, motionless, at my Agincourt for more than twelve hours. This shocked and sobered me, and made me see how one could spend entire days, nights, weeks, even years of one's life in an opium stupor. I would make sure that my first opium experience was also my last.

At the end of that summer of 1965, I moved to New York to begin a post-graduate fellowship in neuropathology and neurochemistry. December, 1966, was a bad time: I was finding New York



difficult to adjust to after my years in California; a love affair had gone sour; my research was going badly; and I was discovering that I was not cut out to be a bench scientist. Depressed and insomniac, I was taking ever-increasing doses of chloral hydrate to get to sleep, and was up to fifteen times the usual dose every night. And though I had managed to stockpile a huge amount of the drug—I raided the chemical supplies in the lab at work—this finally ran out on a bleak Tuesday a little before Christmas, and for the first time in several months I went to bed without my usual knockout dose. My sleep was poor, broken by nightmares and bizarre dreams, and upon waking I found myself excruciatingly sensitive to sounds. There were always trucks rumbling along the cobblestoned streets of the West Village; now it sounded as if they were crushing the cobblestones to powder as they passed.

Feeling a bit shaky, I did not ride my motorcycle to work, as usual, but took a train and a bus. Wednesday was brain-cutting day in the neuropathology department, and it was my turn to cut the brain into neat horizontal slices, to identify the main structures as I did so, and observe whether there were any departures from normal. I was usually pretty good at this, but today I found my hand trembling visibly, embarrassingly, and the anatomical names were slow in coming to mind.

When the session ended, I went across the road, as I often did, for a cup of coffee and a sandwich. As I was stirring the coffee, it suddenly turned green, then purple. I looked up, startled, and saw that a customer paying his bill at the cash register had a huge proboscidean head, like an elephant seal. Panic seized me; I slammed a five-dollar bill on the table and ran across the road to a bus. But all the passengers on the bus seemed to have smooth white heads like giant eggs, with huge glittering eyes like the faceted compound eyes of insects—their eyes seemed to move in sudden jerks, which increased the feeling of their fearsomeness and alienness. I realized that I was hallucinating or experiencing some bizarre perceptual disorder, that I could not stop what was happening in my brain, and that I had to maintain at least an external control and not panic or scream or become catatonic, faced by the bug-eyed monsters around me. The best way of doing this, I found, was to write, to describe the hallu-

cination in clear, almost clinical detail, and, in so doing, become an observer, even an explorer, not a helpless victim, of the craziness inside me. I am never without pen and notebook, and now I wrote for dear life, as wave after wave of hallucination rolled over me.

Description, writing, had always been my best way of dealing with complex or frightening situations—though it had never been tested in so terrifying a situation. But it worked; by describing in my lab notebook what was going on, I managed to maintain a semblance of control, though the hallucinations continued, mutating all the while.

Somehow I got off at the right bus stop and onto the train, even though everything now was in motion, whirling vertiginously, tilting and even turning upside down. And I managed to get off at the right station, in my neighborhood in Greenwich Village. As I emerged from the subway, the buildings around me were tossing and flapping from side to side, like flags blowing in a high wind. I was enormously relieved to make it back to my apartment without being attacked, or arrested, or killed by the rushing traffic on the way. As soon as I got back, I felt I had to contact somebody—someone who knew me well, who was both a doctor and a friend. The pediatrician Carol Burnett was the person: we had interned together in San Francisco five years earlier, and resumed a close friendship now that we were both in New York. Carol would understand, she would know



what to do. I dialed her number with a now grossly tremulous hand. "Carol," I said, as soon as she picked up, "I want to say goodbye. I've gone mad, psychotic, insane. It started this morning and it's getting worse all the while."

"Oliver?" Carol said. "What have you just taken?"

"Nothing," I replied. "That's why I'm so frightened." Carol thought for a moment, then asked, "What have you just stopped taking?"

"That's it!" I said. "I was taking a huge amount of chloral hydrate and ran out of it last night."

"Oliver, you chump! You always overdo things," Carol said. "You've got a classic case of the DTs, delirium tremens."

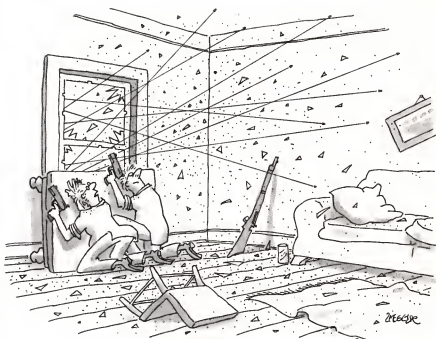
This was an immense relief—much better DTs than a schizophrenic psychosis. But I was quite aware of the dangers of the DTs: confusion, disorientation, hallucination, delusion, dehydration, fever, rapid heartbeat, exhaustion, seizures, death. I would have advised anyone else in my state to get to an emergency room immediately, but for myself I wanted to tough it out, and experience it to the full. Carol agreed to sit with me for the first day and then, if she thought I was safe by myself, she would look by or phone me at intervals, calling in outside help if she judged it necessary. Given this safety net, I lost much of my anxiety, and could even, in a way, enjoy the phantasms of delirium tremens (though the myriads of small animals and insects were anything but pleasant). The hallucinations continued for almost ninety-six hours, and when they finally stopped I fell into an exhausted stupor.

As a boy, I had known extreme delight in the study of chemistry and the setting up of my own chemistry lab. This delight seemed to desert me at the age of fifteen or so; in my years at school, university, medical school, and then internship and residency, I kept my head above water, but the subjects I studied never excited me in the same intense way as chemistry had when I was a boy. It was not until I arrived in New York and began seeing patients in a migraine clinic in the summer of 1966 that I began to feel a little stirring of the intellectual excitement and emotional engagement I had known in my earlier years. In the hope of whipping up these intellectual and emotional excitements even further, I turned to amphetamines.

I would take the stuff on Friday evenings after getting back from work and would then spend the whole weekend so high that images and thoughts would become rather like controllable hallucinations, imbued with ecstatic emotion. I often devoted these "drug holidays" to romantic daydreaming, but one Friday, in February of 1967, while I was exploring the rare-book section of the medical library, I

found and took out a rather rare book on migraine entitled "On Megrim, Sick-Headache, and Some Allied Disorders: A Contribution to the Pathology of Nerve-Storms," written, in 1873, by one Edward Livinge, M.D. I had been working for several months in a migraine clinic, and I was fascinated by the range of symptoms and phenomena that could occur in migraine attacks. These attacks often included an aura, a prodrome in which aberrations of perception and even hallucinations occurred. They were entirely benign and would last only a few minutes, but those few minutes provided a window onto the functioning of the brain and how it could break down and then reintegrate. In this way, I felt, every attack of migraine opened out into an encyclopedia of neurology.

I had read dozens of articles about migraine and its possible basis, but none of them seemed to present the full richness of its phenomenology or the range and depth of suffering that patients might experience. It was in the hope of finding a fuller, deeper, and more human approach to migraine that I took out Livinge's book from the library that weekend. So, after downing my bitter draft of amphetamine—heavily sugared, to make it more palatable—I started reading. As the intensity of the amphetamine effect took hold of me, stimulating my emotions and imagination, Livinge's book seemed to increase in intensity and depth and beauty. I wanted nothing but to enter Livinge's mind and imbibe the atmosphere of the time in which he worked. In a sort of catatonic concentration so intense that in ten hours I scarcely moved a muscle or wet my lips, I read steadily through the five hundred pages of "Megrim." As I did so, it seemed to me almost as if I were becoming Livinge himself, actually seeing the patients he described. At times, I was unsure whether I was reading the book or writing it. I felt myself in the Dickensian London of the eighteen-sixties and seventies. I loved Livinge's humanity and social sensitivity, his strong assertion that migraine was not some indulgence of the idle rich but could affect those who were poorly nourished and worked long hours in ill-ventilated factories. In this way, his book reminded me of Henry Mayhew's great 1861 study of London's working classes, but equally one could tell how well Livinge had been trained in biology and the physical sciences, and what a master



*"Wow. Great fusillade."*

of clinical observation he was. I found myself thinking, This represents the best of mid-Victorian science and medicine; it is a veritable masterpiece! The book gave me what I had been hungering for during the months that I was seeing patients with migraine and being frustrated by the thin, impoverished articles that seemed to constitute the modern "literature" on the subject. At the height of this ecstasy, I saw migraine shining like an archipelago of stars in the neurological heavens.

But about a century had passed since Livinge worked and wrote in London. Rousing myself from my reverie of being Livinge or one of his contemporaries, I came to and said to myself, "Now it is the nineteen-sixties, not the eighteen-sixties. Who could be the Livinge of our time?" A disingenuous clutter of names spoke themselves in my mind. I thought of Dr. A. and Dr. B. and Dr. C. and Dr. D., all of them good men but none with that mixture of science and humanism which was so powerful in Livinge. And then a very loud internal voice said, "You silly bugger! You're the man!"

On every previous occasion when I had come down after two days of amphetamine-induced mania, I had experienced a severe reaction in the other direction, feeling an almost narcoleptic drowsiness

and depression. I would also have an acute sense of folly that I had endangered my life for nothing—amphetamines in the large doses I took would give me a sustained pulse rate close to two hundred and a blood pressure of I-know-not-what; several people I knew had died from overdoses of amphetamines. I would feel that I had made a crazy ascent into the stratosphere but had come back empty-handed and had nothing to show for it; that the experience had been as empty and vacuous as it was intense. This time, though, when I came down, I retained a sense of illumination and insight; I had had a sort of revelation about migraine. I had a sense of resolution, too, that I was indeed equipped to write a Livinge-like book, that perhaps I could be the Livinge of our time.

The next day, before I returned Livinge's book to the library, I photocopied the whole thing, and then, bit by bit, I started to write my own book. The joy I got from doing this was real—infinite more substantial than the vapid mania of amphetamines—and I never took amphetamines again. ♦

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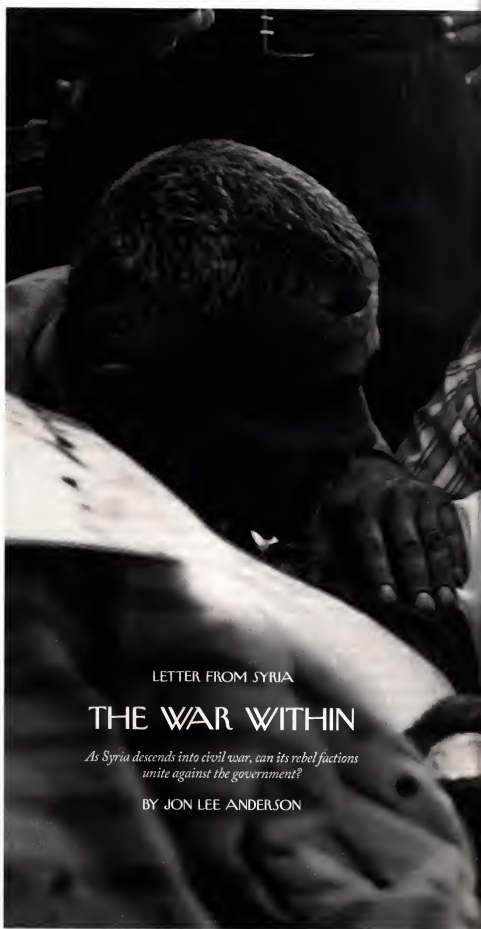
A conversation with Oliver Sacks and John Bennett.

A few weeks ago, in a rebel headquarters near Aleppo, an officer in the Free Syrian Army showed me a map of an offensive. Traced out on paper in pen and ink, it delineated districts in the city, identifying each by a letter, which allowed the rebels to monitor their expanding turf. The officer pointed to districts C and B, and said, "Those are liberated." Pointing to A, he said, "Half an hour ago, we reached the middle of the city, near the Citadel"—the medieval fortress that looms on a hill. I asked about district D, an area deeper in the city. "It's still not in the hands of the F.S.A.," he said matter-of-factly. Another chart showed where rebel groups had established themselves. "This lets us know how many are where," he said, "and helps us to decide how much food and medicine and other supplies to send." He smiled at the evidence of conquest and said, "It's a good system."

For seventeen months, President Bashar al-Assad has kept up a grinding campaign against the rebels, which has killed as many as twenty thousand of his citizens. But last month a spectacular series of events recast the pattern of the war. On July 18th, rebels bombed a regime intelligence headquarters in the capital, Damascus, killing four of the country's senior military and intelligence officials. In the confusion, the rebels launched major offensives, taking neighborhoods in Damascus for the first time. Assad disappeared—sparking wild rumors that he had dispatched his family to Moscow and fled to the Mediterranean coast—and tens of thousands of Syrians left in a panicked exodus to neighboring countries.

In the next few days, the rebels also stormed into Aleppo, Syria's largest city and its commercial center, pressing all the way to the walls of the Old City—a labyrinth of alleyways and narrow streets that contain ancient buildings, chic hotels, and a villa belonging to the shoe designer Christian Louboutin, a favorite of Syria's First Lady. The Old City of Aleppo has persisted for five thousand years, but there was no guarantee that it would survive this war. In 1982, when Assad's father, Hafez al-Assad, crushed an uprising in the city of Hama, as many as thirty thousand people were killed and the old town was almost completely levelled.

I drove into Aleppo on the morning of July 26th. A counterattack by the



LETTER FROM SYRIA

## THE WAR WITHIN

*As Syria descends into civil war, can its rebel factions unite against the government?*

BY JON LEE ANDERSON

*Bashar al-Assad's regime has killed as many as twenty thousand people during the war. At*



MAGNUM

*the funeral of a young rebel, a mourner said, "As soon as this burial is over, I am going to Aleppo to fight." Photographs by Moises Saman.*



*"Your inability to turn off your critical voice, combined with your fear of disappointing your overbearing, demanding father, is causing you to lose faith in your fastball."*

regime was imminent; according to reports, Assad had dispatched a large armored column to retake the city, and rebels to the south were attacking the troops, trying to slow them down. In an apparent effort to scare out any civilians remaining in the rebel-held districts, the regime had flown MIG fighter jets overhead, sending out sonic booms and dropping bombs. On the ride into the city, I saw that most of the traffic was going the other way: small Chinese vans, packed with people and their belongings, evacuating to the northern towns and villages.

In northeastern Aleppo, where the rebels had attacked, streets were littered with torched buses, cars, and tanks. The rebels were based in the Sheikh Najjar neighborhood, in a school that sat alongside a basketball court whose walls were decorated with large paintings of Mickey Mouse and SpongeBob SquarePants. It was a very hot day, and someone had stacked up six-packs of orange soda. The hallways and rooms were full of fighters carrying weapons, guiding bound prisoners, and conferring over plans. There were few civilians to be seen.

The leader of the rebel force, a lean, bearded figure who calls himself Haji Mara, said that he and his men were ready for Assad's forces. "We don't care about them," he told me. The regime still had troops within the city, but they were too weak to strike back, he said. The rebels' main trouble was with snipers and with the shabiha, the paramilitary civilian thugs who serve as the regime's death squads. The shabiha, whose name derives from the Arabic word for "ghosts," were involved in some of the conflict's worst atrocities, including the May 25th massacre in the town of Houla, in which a hundred and eight civilians were killed, most of them women and children.

In Aleppo, the shabiha were out torturing and killing any rebels they could apprehend. But Haji Mara seemed willing to tolerate them, if they would not interfere with his cause. "We've told them to stay in their houses and, if they have a weapon, to put it down," he said. "We have no quarrel with them." At one point, a rebel handed him a cell phone, with a call from an enemy officer stuck in a police station that his men were besieging.

In a carefully controlled tone, Haji Mara urged him to defect. Turning away from the mouthpiece, he whispered, "He's afraid of the government." To the officer, he said, "We are the government now. If you defect, you won't be punished."

There was a commotion just outside the office: thudding blows, a scream, and the sounds of scuffling and angry shouting. In a classroom across the hall, armed men stood guard over a group of frightened-looking prisoners sitting at children's desks, while a man was beaten in front of them. A few minutes later, he was led out: a rebel fighter who had been arrested on suspicion of being a shabiha. He yelled with rage and fear, and another fighter, a burly, bearded man, yelled back at him. A crowd formed as the bearded man struck at the accused shabiha, who struggled to defend himself. At last, he was handcuffed and led away.

Haji Mara showed little pity for his prisoners. "They are thieves, looters, and secret police," he said.

**I**n Syria, where the President has bombed his own cities rather than relinquish power, it should shock no one that his opponents have resorted to violence. Since the beginning of the conflict, Assad's security forces have displayed an extraordinary capacity for cruelty. The anti-regime protests began peacefully, and turned violent only after the police shot at demonstrators and tortured to death a group of adolescent protesters, returning their bodies to their families gouged with knives and, in at least one case, castrated. When Assad was accused of killing civilians, he insisted that the victims were combatants—speaking, as ever, with the flat affect of a store manager disclosing poor sales figures.

The rebels have mostly avoided harming civilians, and many of the fighters I met seemed earnestly concerned with the fate of their country. And yet a growing number of them are proving to be as capable of cruelty to their foes as the regime—which, of course, many of them fought for until just recently. The armed core of the Free Syrian Army is composed mostly of former soldiers, who describe themselves as "defectors"—one moment shooting unarmed civilian protesters on behalf of the regime, and the next shooting back at their former comrades-in-arms.



For months, policymakers and pundits have debated whether Syria was in a state of civil war. Today, it is undeniably so, but not in the schoolbook sense of the phrase, with its connotation of two tidily opposed sides—Yanks and Reds squaring off at Antietam. Instead, the war comprises a bewildering assortment of factions. Most of the rebels, like seventy-five per cent of Syria's citizens, are Sunni Arabs, while the Assad regime is dominated by Alawites, members of a Shiite offshoot that makes up about eleven per cent of the population. But the country also has Christians of several sects, Kurds, non-Alawite Shiites, and Turkomans, along with Palestinians, Armenians, Druze, Bedouin nomads, and even some Gypsies. Each group has its own political and economic interests and traditional alliances, some of which overlap and some of which conflict. There are Kurds who are close to the regime and others who are opposed. Around the cities of Hama and Homs, the regime's paramilitary thugs are Alawite; in Aleppo, hired Sunnis often do the dirty work.

While so far the United States and Europe have decided that the conflict is too complicated to resolve with a Libya-like mission, most countries in the region are taking sides. The Shiite-led states support the government. Three weeks after the bombing in Damascus, Assad emerged from hiding to meet with Iran's national-security adviser, Saeed Jalili, who said, "Iran will never allow, in any form, the breaking of the axis of resistance," referring to Syria, Iran, and Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shiite militia.

On the other side, Sunni states back the rebels. Saudi Arabia and Qatar have provided weapons and cash. The Turkish Prime Minister discreetly established a border base camp for regime officers defecting to the F.S.A., and said that if Syrian forces approached the border they would be fired on. Away from the Muslim world, the conflict has been no less divisive. China has aligned itself with Assad, and so has Russia, which has a naval base in Syria and a large-scale arms arrangement with the regime. The United States is unquestionably on the side of the rebels. Obama reportedly signed a secret "finding" to provide them with covert support, and the Administration is working through intermediaries, including Turkey and the Gulf States, to establish a

political plan for the country's future. But Obama and his aides are concerned that the only goal uniting the many rebel factions is the desire to depose Assad. What will hold the country together after that common cause is gone?

**T**he farm country to the north of Aleppo is a patchwork of towns and villages, each aligned with its own sect or ethnicity. But Sunnis dominate the region, and during the surge in July the rebels "liberated" a number of towns there. One of them was Azaz, a town of thirty-five thousand situated just a few miles from the present-day border with Turkey. For a thousand years, Azaz has been a gateway to Aleppo, and a staging ground for would-be conquerors. In 1030, it was the site of a major battle between the forces of the Byzantine emperor and those of the Mirdasid, the dynastic rulers of the province. The remains of a Bronze Age fort rise incongruously in the center of town.

I arrived in Azaz two days after the rebels took power, and signs of recent combat were everywhere. The shops were shuttered and the streets empty; electrical lines dangled from poles; houses were peppered with bullet holes and blasted by mortar shells. A handful of armed rebels stood guard in the shade of the former headquarters of Assad's Baath Party, which was now the hub of local operations for the Free Syrian Army. The

fighters were in civilian clothes but wore baseball caps adorned with the colors of the rebel flag—the closest thing they had to a uniform.

Since securing Azaz, rebel officers told me, they had dispatched some fighters to bolster their comrades' ranks in Aleppo. The towns in the region were the main source of fighters in the city. Each had sent a handful of men, a few dozen—whoever could be spared—adding up to perhaps a few hundred fighters. In an office in the former Party headquarters, a television showed jerky news footage of the ongoing battle: rebel fighters celebrating atop a captured tank on an Aleppo street. But it was clearly going to be a hard fight. The regime's snipers were slowing the rebels' advance, and helicopters and warplanes were strafing and dropping bombs. The rebels seemed nervous, but they insisted that they would soon be in charge of the whole area.

**D**uring the rebels' siege of Azaz, Assad's forces had hunkered down to fight in a complex of buildings in the town center. They had posted snipers on the roof and on the twin minarets of a large, newly built mosque; it had been bombed, and now the façade had gaping holes several stories high. Down the street, the military-intelligence headquarters had also been bombed, and several floors had collapsed like a sandwich, spewing rubble onto the street. Inside the



*"It's not you—it's the things I've read about you."*

buildings was evidence of a desperate last stand: floors caked with spilled food and human feces, shell casings, discarded uniforms, boots, and blankets. Graffiti scrawled on the walls read, "Assad, or we burn the country," "God for worship and Assad for leadership."

On the roof of the mosque, rebels had installed a black flag bearing a devotional inscription. When I asked Yasir al-Haji, my Syrian guide, about it, he looked at me sharply and said, "It's not Al Qaeda, if that's what you're thinking." In recent days, there had been reports claiming that Al Qaeda had infiltrated the Syrian rebels. Yasir, a businessman in his early fifties from the nearby town of Mara, was a prominent leader of the Local Coordination Committees, the civilian support network for the uprising; a man of moderate political views, he was concerned that the reports would dissuade Westerners from aiding the cause. When the F.S.A. began to coalesce, Yasir said, it held little attraction for the conservative farmers of the area; instead, a hard-line Islamist group called Hizb ut-Tahrir had grown in influence. "At the beginning, the revolution allied with them," Yasir explained. "But, when they tried to make it too extreme, we didn't like that, and we told them no. So we agreed to a black flag that said simply, 'There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His messenger.'"

There was no doubt, though, that Islamist-extremist cells were active in Syria. Although their numbers were uncertain—a U.S. Administration official told me, "We're not talking about dozens of people, nor are we talking about thousands"—they were in evidence. In Reyhanli, a town on the Turkish side of the border, I met a Syrian doctor named Ahmed, who had established a network of paramedics and a field hospital in Syria for wounded rebel fighters and civilians. With him were two brawny young men, with long, jihadi-style beards, whom he was smuggling over the border. They looked Pakistani but spoke English with a British accent, and said that they were from the United Kingdom. After I identified myself as a journalist, they abruptly left the room, insisting that Dr. Ahmed accompany them. He came back alone, and refused to answer questions about his guests, saying only that they were coming to "help Syria."

The next night, two photographers,

one Dutch and one British, vanished nearby after crossing into Syria, and word trickled out that they had been captured by foreign jihadis. After a week, the photographers escaped, with the help of F.S.A. fighters. They said that they had been handcuffed and beaten, and accused of being Western spies. Their captors, they said, were a group of several dozen foreign religious extremists, several of whom were Pakistani and spoke with British accents.

As it turned out, the group that had blown up the military-intelligence headquarters and the mosque in Azaz was also Islamist, and was headed by a man who called himself Abu Anas. Like many rebels, his men had established a base in a commandeered school—in this case, a girls' high school in the center of town. A thin man in his twenties, with shaggy dark hair and a beard, Abu Anas wore a black Polo shirt and a holstered pistol when he received me in his office. With lilac-colored walls and salmon-pink curtains, the office was a difficult place in which to give the impression of ferocity, but Abu Anas had made a concerted effort. On a desk, he had laid a Koran and another holy book, and a sword with a battered golden scabbard, engraved with Koranic inscriptions. Behind him hung a black flag, like the one that flew on the mosque.

A young aide brought some photocopies of Google Earth maps of Azaz, and Abu Anas, pointing out what had been the enemy's key positions, explained how the rebels had taken the town. "First, we cut off their water and electricity," he said. "Then we gradually surrounded them and shot at them and tried to get them to fire back at us until they ran out of ammunition." The final battle had stretched for twenty-four hours, he said, and ended only when some of Assad's soldiers began defecting. On a laptop, he showed a film clip, in which his men fired furiously at regime soldiers inside the mosque and then surged inside themselves. "We killed and captured some and some escaped," he said. "They tried to get out of town, but we ambushed and killed most of them." Abu Anas had taken some wounded men prisoners, but found that he didn't have enough medicine even for his own fighters. "We couldn't look after them, so we let them die," he said.



*Abu Anas, the head of a rebel faction that helped*

Another clip showed tanks retreating from the town; one of them blew up in a great explosion. "That was my I.E.D.," Abu Anas said proudly. "I made it, and he"—he pointed to his aide—"planted it." The aide, I noticed, had a bandage on his hand. Abu Anas also claimed credit for the explosion that had shattered the mosque. "I did that myself," he said. "I'm an explosives expert. The government had snipers in the minarets, and we thought it best to destroy them, in case the government came back." When I asked how he had learned his craft, he said, "I was taught by some people—Syrians who were in Iraq and Afghanistan. The explo-



lead the siege of Azaz. He wants to establish an Islamic state in Syria. "We'll kill everyone who has fought against us," he said.

sives are the same kind that were used to blow up American tanks."

Other than the fact that he was born in 1987, and that he was from Idlib, a province south of Aleppo, Abu Anas refused to disclose anything about his background or about the origins of his group. "Everything before the revolution is secret," he said. He wanted an Islamic state in Syria; he mentioned Umar ibn Abdulaziz, an eighth-century caliph, and said, "I'd like to go back to that time." But when I asked what current Islamic states he admired he seemed at a loss. Saudi Arabia? He grimaced and shook his head. "They're not Islamic," he said. What about the Afghan

Taliban? "I'm not sure," he said, looking puzzled.

Abu Anas said that Islam offered a great deal to the world. He'd heard that Western powers were studying the Islamic banking system as a solution to their financial ills. But, he added sourly, "most of our countries are just dictatorships, and the leaders rule them like kings. Most of them, too, are supported by the United States. If the U.S. didn't like them, it would have got rid of them." He held up the Koran and the sword and declared solemnly, "We want the Islamic system. And those who only think about themselves should be killed: Bashar, Mubarak,

King Abdullah of Jordan, the king of Saudi Arabia, and the kings of Kuwait and Morocco." His aide added, "And also Vladimir Putin, and Iran's leaders."

"What about Syria's Shiites?" I asked.

Abu Anas replied, "We'll kill everyone who has fought against us, including Sunnis." His aide said, "We don't like to do this, but the government has pushed us to this position. Iran has been helping Bashar al-Assad, and so has Nasrallah"—Hassan Nasrallah, the Hezbollah leader. "And the regime has armed the Alawites and Shiites against us."

Increasingly, the question of loyalty to the regime has come down to sect

affiliation: a majority of the Army's rank-and-file soldiers are Sunni conscripts, while the commanders of the military and of the myriad intelligence agencies are Alawites. Abu Anas's aide was a defector, having fled two months earlier. "I think eighty per cent of the soldiers in the Army would like to defect, but they're afraid," he said. "If they suspect you, they will kill you on the spot." In the Army, internal-affairs agents were constantly on the lookout for potential traitors, who were often murdered to dissuade others. As a soldier, he said, he had been forced to do things that he now felt guilty about. "We would have to shell a town just to please an officer, or because it had had a demonstration. One night, we saw a house with a light on. The officer said, 'There wasn't a light on yesterday. Shell it.' So we did."

In one of Abu Anas's film clips, his men were shown meeting up near the mosque with another column of fighters. "Those are Abu Ibrahim's men," he explained. There were three rebel groups operating in Azaz, each with control over a different sector of town, and although they had loosely cooperated to drive out Assad's Army, each group appeared to keep mostly to itself. Abu Ibrahim, the

leader of one of the militias, had established a base at a commandeered border post outside of Azaz, and one day I went to meet him.

If Abu Anas was a holy warrior, Abu Ibrahim resembled a mid-level Mob boss: a hulking man in his early forties, dressed in a stained T-shirt, a baseball cap, and warmup pants with a pistol shoved into the waistband. He walked with a limp; a sniper had shot him in the left calf, in one of three recent assassination attempts. When I met him, he was sitting with some of his gunmen in the customs office. The border gate, a few hundred yards off, hung open, but there was no traffic.

Abu Ibrahim was receiving a Kurdish delegation—three unarmed men in civilian clothes. One of them, a short, jowly man in his forties who said that his name was Abu Ahmed, explained that they were from Afrin, a nearby Syrian district that was populated mostly by Kurds. They had remained neutral in the conflict, but now, he said, "we know there is a revolution in Syria and we want to join this revolution."

Abu Ibrahim waved a hand, and said, "You can join, but no drugs." His men exchanged looks and laughed. Abu Ibrahim

described himself as a "fruit merchant," but he had a reputation as an all-purpose trader, working across a border known as a major transshipment point for Central Asian narcotics.

The Kurds in Turkey are embroiled in a struggle to obtain an independent homeland; for years, the Kurdistan Workers' Party—a separatist group known as the P.K.K.—has fought against the Turkish Army. In recent weeks, Turkey has accused Assad of arming P.K.K. fighters in Syria, and Abu Ahmed reported the same thing. "The Army has withdrawn from our area, and has been handing weapons to the P.K.K.," he said. Assad, he suggested, was hoping to start a conflict among the Kurds, in order to weaken a possible alliance with the rebels.

The visitors stressed that their organization was opposed to the P.K.K. "We are against them because they are with the government," Abu Ahmed said. There were hundreds of Kurdish villages in the Afrin district, he said, and "in all of them there are people who want to join the revolution, but the P.K.K. won't let us. So we have come to see Abu Ibrahim to see how we can join the revolution, and to see what to do after the government is overthrown." To be able to take on the P.K.K., he and his comrades needed weapons, he said. Incomprehensibly, Abu Ibrahim whispered to a deputy. He shook hands with the Kurds as they filed out of the room.

Abu Ibrahim turned to me, smiled broadly, and said that he wanted Syria to be a democracy, with an elected parliament and good relations with Western countries, including Israel—"as long as they return the Golan Heights." He asked pointedly, "Why haven't the Americans helped us?" Despite Obama's secret "finding," he hadn't received any aid from the West, he told me. "Meanwhile, Bashar's getting help from Iran, Russia, China, Iraq, and Hezbollah," he said bitterly.

Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, has referred to Assad and his officials as "comrades-in-arms," but has stopped short of publicly offering military support. When I asked Abu Ibrahim what kind of aid the regime was receiving from Hezbollah, he ordered his fighters to leave the room. In May, he told me, his men had captured eleven Lebanese men at a checkpoint they



controlled. The visitors claimed to be pilgrims, on a bus tour of Shiite holy sites in the region, but Abu Ibrahim was sure that they were Hezbollah agents; he claimed that they had bragged about it to his men, whom they mistook for Assad's soldiers. Since then, he had kept them hidden, and their presence had done a great deal for his reputation. Before the conflict, Abu Ibrahim had been a man of undistinguished stature in the area. Now he controlled what he called "a battalion"—perhaps three hundred men. His fighters had captured most of their weapons from the Syrian Army, he said, but Qatar's government had given him 1.3 million euros in cash, which had helped with food and medical supplies.

When I asked to see the prisoners, he said that he needed to think about it. But he pointed out that his "guests" had changed during their time with him. "They now understand better who Syria's rebels really are," he said. "They know that what they were told about us before was lies."

A few days later, Abu Ibrahim received me in Azaz, in the office of the town's former Baath Party chief, and had his guards bring in three men, dressed in casual clothes and wearing sandals. One of them, a bearded man in his late twenties, said that he was a preacher. Looking anxious, he held himself erect and said, "First, I want to say that we are not kidnapping people. We are not. We are the guests of a really great man." Another, a sharp-eyed travel agent in his forties, said, "As God is my witness, and I repeat this, three times, I have never seen such a man as this." Looking on, Abu Ibrahim sat back and smiled.

The rebels controlled the ground around Mara, but Assad still controlled the air. One day, driving through the countryside, Yasir and I came over a hill and saw one of the regime's MI-24 Russian helicopters hovering. These gunships, which Assad began deploying earlier this year, can travel almost three hundred miles an hour, and are armed with rockets and heavy machine guns.

The countryside in the area is fertile, with potato and wheat fields and orchards of olives and apricots, and, even as the helicopters flew overhead, farmers drove tractors piled with produce. But it was becoming more difficult to go on with life as usual. Late one night, I was on the flat



*"Put down that sad soft porn for middle-aged women and come to bed."*

roof of a house in Mara when a shell came whistling overhead and exploded nearby. My hosts and I scrambled to the ground—the house had been rocketed and strafed several times before—and found that the shell had crashed into another house. The members of the family were all wounded, but still alive.

The shell had come from a Syrian Army Ranger base, seven miles to the southeast. The Rangers rarely ventured out, but they fired periodic volleys from inside the walls, and we often heard the thumps of the shells, like a giant hammer hitting the earth. Mostly, they aimed at targets in Aleppo, but sometimes they just fired anywhere. From the regime's perspective, almost everywhere was now enemy territory.

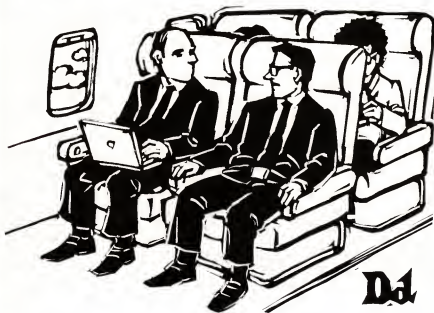
The Assad's regime has played on sectarian tensions, but its coercive power also kept conflict restrained. With the war, that stricture was loosening. "The social tapestry in northern Syria is so complex, and one of the tragedies of the conflict is the coming apart of that tapestry," Fawaz Gerges, the director of the Middle East Centre at the London School of Economics, told me. "At the end of the war, we may see a long, drawn-out conflict between and within the factions." With guns and fighters flowing into the area, it was risky to stand alone, and also risky to declare allegiances. Few prominent Ala-

wites had defected to the rebel side, and Aleppo's substantial Christian population remained cautiously neutral; Yasir spoke of trying in vain to engage with influential Christians he knew. The Shiites in the region were not affiliated with the Alawite sect, but they still had to be careful not to seem to be supporting Assad.

After the meeting in Abu Ibrahim's office, Yasir was eager to find out where the local Kurds' sympathies lay. He called Jamil Rahmano, a politician in the Kurdish village of Emhoush, and made arrangements for us to meet him. We drove to the village and pulled up in front of a school on the outskirts, as Rahmano had instructed; he called to say that he would be there in ten minutes. A couple of young men emerged from the walled compound of the school and, glaring suspiciously, asked who we were and where we were from. When Yasir announced our nationalities, the young men dodged out of sight and came back with pump-action shotguns. Pointing the guns, they yelled, "We don't want America here! Get out of Syria!" Yasir re-started the car and we sped off.

A few days later, Rahmano came to see us in Mara. He made a ceremonious apology, saying that he had been delayed because he was evacuating fellow-Kurds from Aleppo. The men who had threatened





*"I have two children from a previous Las Vegas off-site meeting."*

us were guards tasked with the village's defense. "They don't represent our views," he said. He explained that his organization was a former Syrian affiliate of the P.K.K., but he denied that it was pro-regime. "We have been with the revolution since the beginning," he said. So would his men fight on behalf of the Free Syrian Army? "We are against Bashar al-Assad in a peaceful way," he said. After a moment's thought, he changed his position: "In our areas, we are armed, and we can definitely defend ourselves from the Syrian Army."

Yasir was vexed; this kind of ambiguous talk was increasingly common in the region. Later, the U.S. Administration official explained that Rahman's group had been close to Assad's regime but had recently agreed to switch sides and fight with the rebels. The alliance was marked by distrust, and was inconsistent from town to town. "We have seen this played out very differently in different places across the north," the official said. "It all comes down to local politics."

In the hope of deciphering the landscape, Yasir took me to see Abdul Nasser Khatib, one of the main F.S.A. commanders in Mara. A stocky man with a graying beard, he was a former interior decorator and the father of nine children. The regime was arming Kurds elsewhere, but, he said, "the Kurds around here are working with us. Because they see us winning, they

see it as in their interest to do so. The Kurds, you know how they are—they always want to be with whoever is strong."

Khatib was also suspicious of the Shi'ites. "I don't trust them at all," he said. "They've been isolated, and we have nothing to do with them." But if the rebels gained power they would need to resolve these differences. "It's a problem," he acknowledged. "If we take Aleppo, I think they'll come and ask for forgiveness. And that would be a good thing, because they used to do shabiha work for the regime."

"If the Shi'ites don't ask for forgiveness, what then?" I asked.

"That's a question we'll look into after the revolution," Khatib said.

On July 23rd, forty-eight hours after the rebels rushed into Aleppo, their assault began to slow down. They didn't have sufficient arms and fighters to advance while still holding the neighborhoods they had already taken, and so they dug in, focussing their attacks on police stations and other strategic targets. Meanwhile, snipers and plainclothes thugs were killing their men.

That day, Yasir and I attended a mourning ceremony in Mara for a twenty-five-year-old man named Habib al-Akramah, who had been killed in Aleppo that morning. Habib had been a taxi-driver a few days earlier, when he joined a rebel

force to fight in the northeastern part of the city. Shabiha had captured Habib, tortured him to death, and hurled his body into the street, where his comrades had found him.

We arrived at the family's house just as Habib's body was delivered. A van pulled up, and a group of men removed the body and brought it inside, passing through a silent crowd of male friends and relatives. In a covered courtyard, they laid the body down. The body was shirtless and covered in blood; the neck was gashed below the jawline. A man lifted Habib's belt and pointed to puncture wounds in his abdomen, making a stabbing motion to demonstrate what had happened.

Habib's father asked plaintively, "He wasn't an Israeli—why did they do this to him?" His brother said, "I have five more brothers. As soon as this burial is over, I am going to Aleppo to fight." Waving to the men around him, he said, "All the people here will go, too." In unison, they roared, "*Allahu Akbar!*"

A car pulled up outside, and some men helped a stout older woman wearing a head scarf get out. It was Habib's mother, Fatima. She dropped to the pavement, screaming. One of the men, trying to console her, said, "God is great. Consider Muhammad."

"There is no Muhammad," she wailed. The men lifted her up, beseeching her, but she threw herself on the ground again. It took several minutes to guide her into the house, and, by the time she reached the body, all the mourners were weeping, their anger giving way to heartbreak. Fatima sat down next to the ruined head of her dead son, and cradled it, saying over and over, "Habib, Habib, my son."

As the rebels in Aleppo took prisoners, they sent them to be held in a high school in Mara. (Syria's schools—sturdily built, with windows covered in wire mesh—make good jails.) I visited the new prison one evening, and was reluctantly allowed in by the man in charge, a former truck driver nicknamed Jumbo. Built like a sumo wrestler, with a beard and a pistol in a shoulder holster, he was bagging confiscated knives and guns when his guards showed me in.

Jumbo was terse and no-nonsense, a busy man. He chain-smoked cigarettes, inhaling deeply on each drag. Before taking on his present job, he had been an

active rebel fighter, and had been wounded several times; he drew my hand to the back of his head to feel a bullet embedded there. He had sixty-six prisoners, he said, and there were more arriving all the time. Ten of them were thieves, and the rest were shabiha or informers. Jumbo ordered his men to bring in a couple of suspects, and a few minutes later two dishevelled men, bound and wearing bloodstained clothes, were shoved into the room.

One of the men, with a bushy beard, said that his name was Zakariyya Gazmouz, and that he was thirty-three. As I watched, Jumbo ordered that his shirt be taken off. He had tattoos all over: women's faces, swords, eagles, a pair of tigers breathing fire. "That's nothing," Jumbo said. "Show them the palms of your hands." Gazmouz's hands, too, bore tattoos, as did his feet. In the middle of his chest were inked portraits of Assad, his late father, Hafez, and his late brother Basil, as in a holy trinity. The image of Bashar was covered with fresh gashes, as if someone had tried to obscure it; there were more slash marks all over the man's belly, where a poem in Arabic praised Bashar and Nasrallah. "When I was in the Army, everyone loved them," Gazmouz said. "But now I am willing to go and blow myself up to kill Bashar." He said that his wounds were self-inflicted; he had approached the rebels in Aleppo and, to demonstrate his fealty, had offered to donate blood; instead, they had arrested him, and he had slashed himself with a razor to prove himself. He admitted that he had worked as a police informer at a bakery, helping to support a drug habit, but denied being a shabiha. Jumbo jeered at him, "Of course you're a shabiha." The Assad tattoos, he pointed out, were characteristic of some of the regime's rougher loyalists. Gazmouz's back showed the results of Jumbo's skepticism: among other tattoos were large, angry welts, where he had been beaten.

The second man, Muhammad Shihan, said that he was thirty years old, and had been a clerk in Aleppo's financial district until the building he worked in was blown up. While he was out of a job, the police offered to pay him to help out at one of their checkpoints in the city, and he accepted—but, he hastened to say, this had been only a month earlier. He had a gash on his nose and his right eyebrow; he said that the rebels had attacked his checkpoint, and he had "fallen

down" while trying to run away. Two of his fellow-guards had been killed.

When I asked Shihan what he hoped for, he glanced at Jumbo and said, "I just want the Free Syrian Army to win. And to end this." Jumbo ordered the suspects to be taken away, and the guards hustled them toward the door, keeping their guns trained on them. The two men began shouting hoarsely, "Long live the Free Syrian Army!" as they were marched out of the room.

**B**efore I left Mara, I went to the town's cemetery for the funeral of Habib al-Akramah, the murdered rebel. The grave-diggers, two young brothers, took turns in the hot midmorning sun. Because it was Ramadan, neither could have any water to drink, but they did not complain. They were earning "credit with God," Yasir explained, adding a bleak wisecrack: "Here it costs nothing to get buried."

Both brothers were defectors. One of them, Muhammad, a policeman, had deserted fifteen months earlier; he was still wearing a brown shirt that said "Police" in Arabic script. The other, Hussam, had defected three months earlier; he had been in the secret service, in the city of Hama, he said, and was able to escape to the north when a contact in the F.S.A. gave him a fake I.D. I asked what kinds of missions he had been on. "Burning houses, making arrests, and bringing in women to pressure the men who were believed to be in the F.S.A.," he said.

When the grave was dug, a crowd of men and boys came walking through the cemetery. Habib's mother, Fatima, was there, too, even though Muslim women do not traditionally attend burials. Habib was carried in a blanket slung like a stretcher between two long poles, and the men lowered his body into the grave. As they shovelled in dirt, Fatima fainted. The men chanted, "God is great, Bashar is the enemy of God."

The phrase "enemy of God" is used with increasing frequency these days. Earlier this month, Syria's Prime Minister, a Sunni, defected, and a week later he applied the epithet to his former boss's regime. Fawaz Gerges, of the London School of Economics, told me he feared that the goal of ousting Assad was being

overtaken by ideological and individual aims. The many factions gaining strength in Syria's chaos—the Kurds gathering arms, the leaders of newly founded militias, the criminals, and the foreign jihadists—all have their own ends, and a unified nation may not be first among them. "The next phase is going to be the bloodiest, and it will be the war within," Gerges said.

A week after the funeral, at Haji Mara's headquarters in the school in Aleppo, the rebels led four prisoners out of the classroom and forced them to kneel at the foot of the wall, in front of the image of Mickey Mouse. They were former shabiha who had agreed to work with the rebels and then betrayed them, opening fire on their new allies during a raid on a police station. In the schoolyard, several of them were covered in blood; they had been badly beaten. As one of the rebels filmed with a camera phone, a half-dozen others opened fire with assault weapons. In a barrage that lasted forty-five seconds, they fired hundreds of bullets into the men's bodies, creating such a din that other fighters shielded their ears and ran away.

Through much of the country, bloody fighting has persisted, with neither side capable of a clear victory. On August 8th, the regime began an offensive in Aleppo, and, after several days of intense shelling, the rebels retreated, to continue fighting elsewhere. A week later, a fighter jet dropped powerful bombs on a poor neighborhood in Azaz, destroying homes and killing at least forty civilians. The building where Abu Ibrahim's Lebanese hostages were being held was destroyed, and four of them were killed. In Lebanon, their relatives retaliated by kidnapping several Syrian citizens.

Yasir called to tell me that he had visited Azaz, and had seen women and children cut to pieces—things he "never expected to see in my life." In a shocked voice, he said, "What is Assad thinking? I don't understand." On August 17th, the U.N. announced that it would close its monitoring mission in Syria; after four months of fruitless efforts, there seemed no point in continuing. Edmond Mulet, the U.N.'s deputy head of peacekeeping operations, said, "It's clear that both sides have chosen the path of war." ♦



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FICTION

# AMUNDSEN

BY ALICE MUNRO



On the bench outside the station, I sat and waited. The station had been open when the train arrived, but now it was locked. Another woman sat at the end of the bench, holding between her knees a string bag full of parcels wrapped in oiled paper. Meat—raw meat. I could smell it.

Across the tracks was the electric train, empty, waiting.

No other passengers showed up, and after a while the stationmaster stuck his head out the station window and called, "San." At first I thought he was calling a man's name, Sam. And another man wearing some kind of official outfit did come around the end of the building. He crossed the tracks and boarded the electric car. The woman with the parcels stood up and followed him, so I did the same. There was a burst of shouting from across the street, and the doors of a dark-shingled flat-roofed building opened, letting loose several men, who were jamming caps on their heads and banging lunch buckets against their thighs. By the noise they were making, you'd have thought the car was going to run away from them at any minute. But when they settled on board nothing happened. The car sat while they counted one another and worked out who was missing and told the driver that he couldn't go yet. Then somebody remembered that the missing man hadn't been around all day. The car started, though I couldn't tell if the driver had been listening to any of this, or cared.

The men got off at a sawmill in the bush—it wouldn't have been more than ten minutes' walk—and shortly after that the lake came into view, covered with snow. A long, white, wooden building in front of it. The woman readjusted her packages and stood up, and I followed. The driver again called "San," and the doors opened. A couple of women were waiting to get on. They greeted the woman with the meat, and she said that it was a raw day.

All avoided looking at me as I climbed down behind the meat woman.

The doors banged together, and the train started back.

Then there was silence, the air like ice. Brittle-looking birch trees with black marks on their white bark, and some small, untidy evergreens, rolled up like

sleepy bears. The frozen lake not level but mounded along the shore, as if the waves had turned to ice in the act of falling. And the building, with its deliberate rows of windows and its glassed-in porches at either end. Everything austere and northerly, black-and-white under the high dome of clouds. So still, so immense an enchantment.

But the birch bark not white after all, as you got closer. Grayish yellow, grayish blue, gray.

"Where you heading?" the meat woman called to me. "Visiting hours are over at three."

"I'm not a visitor," I said. "I'm the new teacher."

"Well, they won't let you in the front door, anyway," the woman said with some satisfaction. "You better come along with me. Don't you have a suitcase?"

"The stationmaster said he'd bring it later."

"The way you were just standing there—looked like you were lost."

I said that I had stopped because it was so beautiful.

"Some might think so. 'Less they were too sick or too busy."

Nothing more was said until we entered the kitchen, at the far end of the building. I did not get a chance to look around me, because attention was drawn to my boots.

"You better get those off before they track the floor."

I wrestled off the boots—there was no chair to sit down on—and set them on the mat where the woman had put hers.

"Pick them up and bring them with you. I don't know where they'll be putting you. You better keep your coat on, too. There's no heating in the cloakroom."

No heat, no light, except what came through a little window I could not reach. It was like being punished at school. Sent to the cloakroom. Yes. The same smell of winter clothing that never really dried out, of boots soaked through to dirty socks, unwashed feet.

I climbed up on the bench but still could not see out. On the shelf where caps and scarves were thrown, I found a bag with some figs and dates in it. Somebody must have stolen them and stashed them here to take home. All of a sudden, I was hungry. Nothing to eat since morning, except for a dry cheese

sandwich on the Ontario Northland. I considered the ethics of stealing from a thief. But the figs would catch in my teeth and betray me.

I got myself down just in time. Somebody was entering the cloakroom.

Not one of the kitchen help but a schoolgirl in a bulky winter coat, with a scarf over her hair. She came in with a rush—books dropped on the bench so that they scattered on the floor, scarf snatched off so that her hair sprang out in a tangle, and at the same time, it seemed, boots kicked loose and sent skittering across the floor. Nobody had got hold of her, apparently, to make her take them off at the kitchen door.

"Oh, I wasn't trying to hit you," the girl said. "It's so dark in here after outside, you don't know what you're doing. Aren't you freezing? Are you waiting for somebody to get off work?"

"I'm waiting to see Dr. Fox."

"Well, you won't have to wait long. I just rode from town with him. You're not sick, are you? If you're sick you can't come here. You have to see him in town."

"I'm the new teacher."

"Are you? Are you from Toronto?"

"Yes."

There was a certain pause, perhaps of respect.

But no. An examination of my coat.

"That's really nice. What's that fur on the collar?"

"Persian lamb. Actually, it's imitation."

"Could have fooled me. I don't know what they put you in here for—it'll freeze your butt off. Excuse me. You want to see the doctor, I can show you the way. I know where everything is. I've lived here practically since I was born. My mother runs the kitchen. My name is Mary. What's yours?"

"Vivi. Vivien."

"If you're a teacher, shouldn't it be Miss? Miss what?"

"Miss Hyde."

"Tan your hide," she said. "Sorry, I just thought that up. I'd like it if you could be my teacher but I have to go to school in town. It's the stupid rules. Because I've not got TB."

She was leading me, while she talked, through the door at the far end of the cloakroom, then along a regular hospital corridor. Waxed linoleum,

dull green paint, an antiseptic smell.

"Now you're here, maybe I'll get Reddy to let me switch."

"Who is Reddy?"

"Reddy Fox. It's out of a book. Me and Anabel just started calling Dr. Fox that."

"Who is Anabel?"

"Nobody now. She's dead."

"Oh, I'm sorry."

"Not your fault. It happens around here. I'm in high school this year. Anabel never really got to go to school at all. When I was just in public school, Reddy got the teacher to let me stay home a lot, so I could keep her company."

She stopped at a half-opened door and whistled.

"Hey. I brought the teacher."

A man's voice said, "O.K., Mary. Enough out of you for one day."

She sauntered away and left me facing a spare man of ordinary height, whose reddish-fair hair was cut very short and glistened in the artificial light from the hallway.

"You've met Mary," he said. "She has a lot to say for herself. She won't be in your class, so you won't have to undergo that every day. People either take to her or they don't."

He struck me as between ten and fifteen years older than me, and at first he talked to me the way an older man would. A preoccupied future employer. He asked about my trip, about the arrangements for my suitcase. He wanted to know how I thought I would like living up here in the woods, after Toronto, whether I would be bored.

Not in the least, I said, and added that it was beautiful.

"It's like—it's like being inside a Russian novel."

He looked at me attentively for the first time.

"Is it really? Which Russian novel?"

His eyes were a bright grayish blue. One eyebrow had risen, like a little peaked cap.

It was not that I hadn't read Russian novels. I had read some all the way through and some only partway. But because of that eyebrow, and his amused but confrontational expression, I could not remember any title except "War and Peace." I did not want to say that, be-

cause it was the one that anybody would remember.

"War and Peace."

"Well, it's only the peace we've got here, I'd say. But if it was the war you were hankering after I suppose you would have joined one of those women's outfits and got yourself overseas."

I was angry and humiliated, because I had not really been showing off. Or not only showing off. I had wanted to explain what a wonderful effect this scenery had on me.

He was evidently the sort of person who posed questions that were traps for you to fall into.

"I guess I was really expecting a sort of old-lady teacher come out of the woodwork," he said, in slight apology. "You didn't study to be a teacher, did you? What were you planning to do once you got your B.A.?"

"Work on my M.A.," I said curtly.

"So what changed your mind?"

"I thought I should earn some money."

"Sensible idea. Though I'm afraid you won't earn much here. Sorry to pry. I just wanted to make sure you weren't going to run off and leave us in the lurch. Not planning to get married, are you?"

"No."

"All right, all right. You're off the hook now. Didn't discourage you, did I?"

I had turned my head away.

"No."

"Go down the hall to Matron's office, and she'll tell you all you need to know. Just try not to get a cold. I don't suppose you have any experience with tuberculosis?"

"Well, I've read—"

"I know. I know. You've read 'The Magic Mountain.'" Another trap sprung, and he seemed restored. "Things have moved on a bit from that, I hope. Here, I've got some things I've written out about the kids here and what I was thinking you might try to do with them. Sometimes I'd rather express myself in writing. Matron will give you the lowdown."

**U**sual notions of pedagogy out of place here. Some of these children will reënter the world or system and some will not. Better not a lot of stress. That is, testing, memorizing, classifying nonsense.

*Disregard grade business entirely. Those who need to can catch up later on or do without. Actually very simple skill set of facts, etc., necessary for going into the world. What about Superior Children, so called? Disgusting term. If they are smart in academic way, they can easily catch up.*

*Forget rivers of South America, likewise Magna Carta.*

*Drawing, music, stories preferred.*

*Games O.K., but watch for overexcitement or too much competitiveness.*

*Challenge to walk the line between stress and boredom. Boredom curse of hospitalization.*

*If Matron can't supply what you need, sometimes janitor will have it stashed away somewhere.*

*Bon voyage.*

I had not been there a week before all the events of the first day seemed unique and unlikely. The kitchen, the kitchen cloakroom where the workers kept their clothes and concealed their thefts were rooms I hadn't seen again and probably wouldn't. The doctor's office was similarly out of bounds, Matron's room being the proper place for all inquiries, complaints, and ordinary arrangements. Matron herself was short and stout, pink-faced, with rimless glasses and heavy breathing. Whatever you asked for seemed to astonish her and cause difficulties, but eventually it was seen to or provided. Sometimes she ate in the nurses' dining room, where she was served a special junket, and cast a pall. Mostly she kept to her own quarters.

Besides Matron, there were three other registered nurses, not one of them within thirty years of my age. They had come out of retirement to serve, doing their wartime duty. Then, there were the nurses' aides, who were my age or even younger, most of them married or engaged or working on being engaged, generally to men in the forces. They talked all the time if Matron and the nurses weren't there. They didn't have the least interest in me. They didn't want to know what Toronto was like, though some of them knew people who had gone there on their honeymoon, and they did not care how my teaching was going or what I had done before. It wasn't that they were rude—they passed me the butter (it was called butter but it was really orange-streaked margarine,





colored in the kitchen) and they warned me off the shepherd's pie, which they said had groundhog in it. It was just that whatever happened in places they didn't know had to be discounted; it got in their way and under their skin. Every time the news came on the radio, they switched it to music. *Dance with a dolly with a hole in her stockin'...*

Yet they were in awe of Dr. Fox, partly because he had read so many books. They also said that there was nobody like him for tearing a strip off you if he felt like it.

I couldn't figure out if they thought there was a connection between reading a lot of books and tearing a strip off.

The number of students who showed up varied. Fifteen, or down to half a dozen. Mornings only, from nine o'clock till noon. Children were kept away if their temperature had risen or if they were undergoing tests. When they were present, they were quiet and tractable but not particularly involved. They had caught on right away that this was a pretend school, where they were free of all requirement to learn anything, just as they were free of times tables and memory work. This freedom didn't make them uppity, or lazy in any troublesome way, just docile and dreamy. They sang rounds softly. They played X's and O's. There was a shadow of defeat over the improvised classroom.

I decided to take the doctor at his word. Or some of his words, such as those about boredom being the enemy.

In the janitor's cubbyhole, I had seen a globe. I asked to have it brought out. I started on simple geography. The oceans, the continents, the climates. Why not the winds and the currents? The countries and the cities? The Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn? Why not, after all, the rivers of South America?

Some children had learned such things before, but they had nearly forgotten them. The world beyond the lake and the forest had dropped away. The lessons seemed to cheer them up, as if they were making friends again with whatever they used to know. I didn't dump everything on them at once, of course. And I had to go easy with the ones who had never learned such things because they had got sick too soon.

But that was all right. It could be a game. I separated them into teams, got

them calling out answers while I darted here and there with the pointer. I was careful not to let the excitement go on too long. But one day the doctor walked in, fresh from morning surgery, and I was caught. I could not stop things cold, but I tried to dampen the competition. He sat down, looking somewhat tired and withdrawn. He made no objection. After a few minutes, he joined in the game, calling out quite ridiculous answers, names that were not just mistaken but imaginary. Then gradually he let his voice die down. Down, down, first to a mumble, then to a whisper, then to complete inaudibility. In this way, with this absurdity, he took control of the room. The whole class took to mouthing, in order to imitate him. Their eyes were fixed on his lips.

Suddenly he let out a low growl that threw them all laughing.

"Why the deuce is everybody looking at me? Is that what Miss Hyde teaches you? To stare at people who aren't bothering anybody?"

Most laughed, but some couldn't stop watching him even for that. They were hungry for further antics.

"Go on. Go off and misbehave yourselves somewhere else."

He apologized to me for breaking up the class. I began to explain to him my reasons for making this more like real school.

"Though I do agree with you about stress," I said earnestly. "I agree with what you said in your instructions. I just thought—"

"What instructions? Oh, that was just some bits and pieces that went through my head. I never meant them to be set in stone."

"I mean as long as they're not too sick—"

"I'm sure you're right. I don't suppose it matters."

"Otherwise they seem sort of listless."

"There's no need to make a song and dance about it," he said, and walked away.

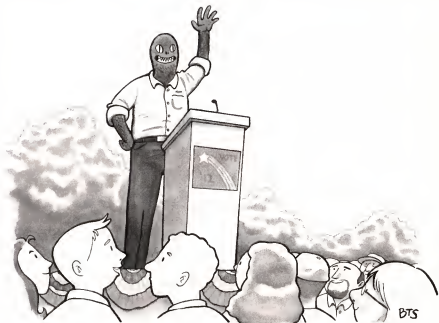
Then turned to make a barely half-hearted apology.

"We can have a talk about it some other time."

That time, I thought, would never come. He evidently thought me a bother and a fool.

I discovered at lunch, from the aides, that somebody had not survived an operation that morning. So my anger turned out not to be justified, and for that reason I felt even more of a fool.

Every afternoon was free. My pupils went down for long naps, and I sometimes felt like doing the same. But my room was cold, and the bedcovers were thin—surely people with



*"The scales say 'alien overlord,' but the rolled-up sleeves say 'man of the people.'"*



*"Oh, come on—it's 8 A.M. somewhere."*

tuberculosis needed something cozier.

I, of course, did not have tuberculosis. Maybe they skimped on provisions for people like me.

I was drowsy but couldn't sleep. Overhead there was the rumble of bed carts being wheeled to the porches for the icy afternoon exposure.

The building, the trees, the lake were never again the same to me as they had been on that first day, when I was caught by their mystery and authority. On that day I had believed myself invisible. Now it seemed as if that were never true.

There's the teacher. What's she up to? She's looking at the lake.

What for?

Nothing better to do.

Some people are lucky.

Once in a while I skipped lunch, even though it was part of my salary, and went in to Amundsen, where I ate in a coffee shop. The coffee was Postum and the best bet for a sandwich was tinned salmon, if they had any. The chicken salad had to be examined carefully for bits of skin and gristle. Nevertheless, I felt more at ease there,

as if nobody would know who I was.

About that I was probably mistaken.

The coffee shop didn't have a ladies' room, so you had to go next door to the hotel, then past the entrance to the beer parlor, always dark and noisy and giving out a smell of beer and whiskey, a blast of cigarette and cigar smoke fit to knock you down. But the loggers, the men from the sawmill, would never yelp at you the way the soldiers and the airmen in Toronto did. They were deep in a world of men, bawling out their own stories, not here to look for women. Possibly more eager, in fact, to get away from that company now or forever.

The doctor had an office on the main street. Just a small one-story building, so he lived elsewhere. I had picked up from the aides that there was no Mrs. Fox. On the only side street, I found a house that might have belonged to him—a stucco-covered house, with a dormer window above the front door, books stacked on the sill of that window. There was a bleak but orderly look to the place, a suggestion of the minimal but precise comfort that a lone man—a regulated lone man—might contrive.

The town school was at the end of

that residential street. One afternoon I spotted Mary in the yard there, taking part in a snowball fight. It seemed to be girls against boys. When she saw me, she cried out loudly, "Hey, Teach," and gave the balls in both hands a random toss, then ambled across the street. "See you tomorrow," she called over her shoulder, more or less as a warning that nobody was to follow.

"You on your way home?" she said.

"Me, too. I used to ride in Reddy's car, but he's got too late leaving. What do you do, take the tram?"

I said yes, and Mary said, "Oh, I can show you the shortcut and you can save your money. The bush road."

She took me up a narrow but passable lane that ran above the town, through the woods, and past the sawmill.

"This is the way Reddy goes," she said.

After the sawmill, beneath us, were some ugly cuts in the woods and a few shacks, apparently inhabited, because they had woodpiles and clotheslines and rising smoke. From one of them, a big wolfish dog ran out with a great display of barking and snarling.

"You shut your face!" Mary yelled. In no time she had packed and flung a snowball, which caught the animal between the eyes. It whirled around, and she had another snowball ready to hit it in the rump. A woman in an apron came out and shouted, "You could've killed him."

"Good riddance to bad rubbish."

"I'll get my old man after you."

"That'll be the day. Your old man can't hit a shithouse."

The dog followed at a distance, with some insincere threatening.

"I can take care of any dog, don't worry," Mary said. "I bet I could take care of a bear if we ran into one."

"Don't bears tend to hibernate at this time of year?"

I had been quite scared by the dog but affected carelessness.

"Yeah, but you never know. One came out early once, and it got into the garbage down at the San. My mom turned around and there it was. Reddy got his gun and shot it. Reddy used to take me and Anabel out on the sled, and sometimes other kids, too, and he had a special whistle that scared off bears. It was pitched too high for human ears."

"Really. What did it look like?"

"It wasn't that kind of whistle. I meant one he could do with his mouth."

I thought of his performance in the classroom.

"I don't know, maybe he just said that to keep Anabel from getting scared. She couldn't ride on the sled. He had to pull her on a toboggan. Sometimes I'd jump on the toboggan, too, and he'd say, 'What's the matter with this thing? It weighs a ton.' Then he'd try to turn around quick and catch me, but he never did. And he'd ask Anabel, 'What makes it so heavy? What did you have for breakfast?' But she never told. She was the best friend I ever will have."

"What about the girls at school? Aren't they friends?"

"I just hang around with them when there's nobody else. They're nothing. Anabel and me had our birthdays in the same month, June. Our eleventh birthday, Reddy took us out on the lake in a boat. He taught us swimming. Well, me. He always had to hold Anabel—she couldn't really learn. Once he went swimming way out by himself, and we filled his shoes up with sand. And then, our twelfth birthday, we couldn't go anywhere like that, but we went to his house and had a cake. She couldn't eat even a little bit of it, so he took us in his car and we threw pieces out the window for the seagulls. They were fighting and screaming. We were laughing ourselves crazy, and he had to stop and hold Anabel so she wouldn't have a hemorrhage."

"And after that," she said, "after that I wasn't allowed to see her anymore. My mom never wanted me to hang around with kids that had TB anyway. But Reddy talked her into it. He said he'd stop it when he had to. So he did, and I got mad. But she wouldn't have been any fun anymore—she was too sick. I'd show you her grave but there isn't anything to mark it yet. Reddy and me are going to make something when he gets time. If we'd have gone straight along on the road, instead of turning where we did, we would have come to her graveyard."

By this time we were down on level ground, approaching the San.

She said, "Oh, I almost forgot," and pulled out a fistful of tickets.

"For Valentine's Day. We're putting

on this play at school and it's called 'Pinafore.' I got all these to sell and you can be my first sale. I'm in it."

I was right about the house in Amundsen being where the doctor lived. He took me there for supper. The invitation seemed to come rather on the spur of the moment when he bumped into me in the hall one day. Perhaps he had an uneasy memory of saying that we would get together to talk about teaching ideas.

The evening he proposed was the one for which I had bought a ticket for "Pinafore." I told him that, and he said, "Well, I did, too. It doesn't mean we have to show up."

"I sort of feel as if I promised her."

"Well, now you can sort of un-promise her. It will be dreadful, believe me."

I did as he said, though I did not see Mary to tell her. I waited where he had instructed me to wait, on the porch outside the front door of the San. I was wearing my best dress, a dark-green crêpe, with little pearl buttons and a real lace collar, and had rammed my feet into suede high-heeled shoes inside my snow boots. I waited past the time he'd mentioned—worried, first, that Matron would come out of her office and spot me, and, second, that he had forgotten all about it.

But then he came along, buttoning up his overcoat, and apologized.

"Always a few bits and bobs to clear up," he said, and led me around the building to his car. "Are you steady?" he asked, and when I said yes—despite the suede shoes—he did not offer his arm.

His car was old and shabby, as most cars were those days. It didn't have a heater. When he said that we were going to his house, I was relieved. I could not see how we would manage with the crowd at the hotel, and I had hoped not to have to make do with the sandwiches at the café.

At his house, he told me not to take off my coat until the place had warmed up a fire. And he got busy at once making a fire in the woodstove.

"I'm your janitor and your cook and your server," he said. "It'll soon be comfortable here, and the meal won't take me long. Don't offer to help. I prefer to

work alone. Where would you like to wait? If you want to, you could look over the books in the front room. It shouldn't be too unbearable in there with your coat on. The light switch is just inside the door. You don't mind if I listen to the news? It's a habit I've got into."

I went into the front room, feeling as if I had more or less been ordered to, leaving the kitchen door open. He came and closed it, saying, "Just until we get a bit of warmth in the kitchen," and went back to the sombrely dramatic, almost religious voice of the CBC, giving out the news of the war.

There were quantities of books to look at. Not just on bookshelves but on tables and chairs and windowsills and piled on the floor. After I had examined several of them, I concluded that he favored buying books in batches and probably belonged to several book clubs. The Harvard Classics. The histories of Will Durant. Fiction and poetry seemed in short supply, though there were a few surprising children's classics. Books on the American Civil War, the South African War, the Napoleonic Wars, the Peloponnesian War, the campaigns of Julius Caesar. Explorations of the Amazon and the Arctic. Shackleton caught in the ice. John Franklin's doomed expedition, the Donner Party, and the Lost Tribes, Newton, and alchemy, the

secrets of the Hindu Kush. Books suggesting someone anxious to *know*, to possess great scattered lumps of knowledge. Perhaps not someone whose tastes were firm and exacting.

So it was possible that when he had asked me, "Which Russian novel?" he had not had so solid a platform as I'd thought.

When he called "Ready," and I opened the door, I was armed with this new skepticism.

I said, "Who do you agree with, Naphta or Settembrini?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"In 'The Magic Mountain.' Do you like Naphta best, or Settembrini?"

"To be honest, I've always thought they were a pair of windbags. You?"

"Settembrini is more humane, but Naphta is more interesting."

"They tell you that in school?"



"I never read it in school," I said coolly.

He gave me a quick look, that eyebrow raised.

"Pardon me. If there's anything in there that interests you, feel free. Please feel free to come down here and read in your time off. There's an electric heater I could set up, since I imagine you are not experienced with woodstoves. Shall we think about that? I can rustle you up an extra key."

"Thank you."

Pork chops, instant mashed potatoes, canned peas. Dessert was an apple pie from the bakery, which would have been better if he'd thought to heat it up.

He asked me about my life in Toronto, my university courses, my family. He said that he supposed I had been brought up on the straight and narrow.

"My grandfather is a liberal clergyman, sort of in the Paul Tillich mold."

"And you? Liberal little Christian granddaughter?"

"No."

"Touché. Do you think I'm rude?"

"That depends. If you are interviewing me as an employer, no."

"So I'll go on. Do you have a boyfriend?"

"Yes."

"In the forces, I suppose."

I said, "In the Navy." That struck me as a good choice, to account for my not knowing where he was and not receiving regular letters.

The doctor got up and fetched the tea.

"What sort of boat is he on?"

"Corvette." Another good choice.

After a while, I could have him torpedoed, as was always happening to corvettes.

"Brave fellow. Milk or sugar in your tea?"

"Neither, thanks."

"That's good, because I haven't got any. You know, it shows when you're lying—you get red in the face."

If I hadn't got red before, I did then. My flush rose from my feet up, and sweat trickled down under my arms. I hoped the dress would not be ruined.

"I always go hot when I drink tea."

"Oh, I see."

Things could not get any worse, so I resolved to face him down. I changed the subject on him, asking about how he operated on people. Did he remove lungs, as I had heard?

He could have answered that with more teasing, more superiority—possibly this was his notion of flirtation—and I believe that if he had done so I would have put on my coat and walked out into the cold. Perhaps he knew that. He began to talk about thoracoplasty. Of course, removal of the lobe had also become popular recently.

"But don't you lose some patients?" I said.

He must have thought it was time to joke again.

"But of course. Running off and hiding in the bush—we don't know where they get to. Jumping in the lake. Or did

you mean don't they die? There are cases where surgery doesn't work, yes."

But great things were coming, he said. The surgery he went in for was going to become as obsolete as bloodletting. A new drug was on the way. Streptomycin. Already used in trial. There were some problems—naturally, there would be problems. Toxicity of the nervous system. But a way would be found to deal with that.

"Put the sawbones like me out of business."

He washed the dishes; I dried. He put a dish towel around my waist to protect my dress. When the ends were efficiently tied, he laid his hand against my upper back. Such firm pressure, fingers separated—he might almost have been taking stock of my body in a professional way. When I went to bed that night, I could still feel the pressure. I felt it develop its intensity from the little finger to the hard thumb. I enjoyed it. It was more important, really, than the kiss placed on my forehead later, the moment before I got out of his car. A dry-lipped kiss, brief and formal, set upon me with hasty authority.

The key to his house showed up on the floor of my room, slipped under the door when I wasn't there. But I couldn't use it after all. If anybody else had made this offer, I would have jumped at the chance. Especially if it included a heater. But, in this case, his past and future presence in the house would draw all ordinary comfort out of the situation and replace it with a pleasure that was nerve-racking rather than expansive. I doubted whether I'd be able to read a word.



*"The fair-weather people are back."*

I expected Mary to come by to scold me for missing "Pinafore." I thought of saying that I had not been well. I'd had a cold. But then I remembered that colds were serious business in this place, involving masks and disinfectant, banishment. And soon I understood that there was no hope of hiding my visit to the doctor's house. It was a secret from nobody, not even from the nurses, who said nothing, either because they were too lofty and discreet or because such carrying on had ceased to interest them. But the aides teased me.

"Enjoy your supper the other night?"

Their tone was friendly; they seemed

## HASTE

*Not so fast* people were always telling me *Slow down take your time* teachers coaches  
the guy who taught me to ride ("*Stop cowboyin'*" he'd shout as if that wasn't the point)

but the admonition that stuck was the whisper that girl that woman that smudged now  
dear girl-woman legs so tightly wound round me sighed young as she was to my ear

Ah the celestial contraption we made though—no matter how you swerved it it held together  
Why not go faster? But she with her fluttery guttural *Slower go slower* knew better knew better

No one says *Not so fast* now not Catherine when I hold her not our dog as I putter behind her  
yet everything past present future rushes so quickly through me I've frayed like a flag

Unbuckle your spurs life don't you know up ahead where the road ends there's an abyss?  
No room for galloping anymore here Surely by now you should know better know better

—C. K. Williams

to approve. My stock had risen. Whatever else I was, at least I didn't turn out to be a woman with a man.

Mary did not put in an appearance all week.

"Next Saturday" were the words that had been said, just before he administered the kiss. So I waited again on the front porch, and this time he was not late. We drove to the house, and I went into the front room while he got the fire going. There I noticed the dusty electric heater.

"Didn't take me up on my offer," he said. "Did you think I didn't mean it? I always mean what I say."

I said that I hadn't wanted to come into town for fear of meeting Mary.

"Because of missing her concert."

"That's if you're going to arrange your life to suit Mary," he said.

The menu was much the same as before. Pork chops, instant mashed potatoes, corn niblets instead of peas. This time he let me help in the kitchen, even asking me to set the table.

"You may as well learn where things are. It's all fairly logical, I believe."

This meant that I could watch him working at the stove. His easy concentration, economical movements, setting off in me a procession of sparks and chills.

We had just begun the meal when there was a knock at the door. He got up and drew the bolt and in burst Mary.

She was carrying a cardboard box, which she set on the table. Then she threw off her coat and displayed herself in a red-and-yellow costume.

"Happy Valentine's Day," she said. "You never came to see me in the concert, so I brought the concert to you."

She stood on one foot to kick off first one boot, then the other. She pushed them out of her way and began to prance around the table, singing at the same time in a plaintive but vigorous young voice:

I'm called Little Buttercup,  
Dear little Buttercup,  
Though I could never tell why.

But still I'm called Buttercup,  
Poor little Buttercup  
Sweet little Buttercup I—

The doctor had got up even before she began to sing. He was standing at the stove, busy scraping at the frying pan that had held the pork chops.

I applauded. I said, "What a gorgeous costume."

It was, indeed. Red skirt, bright-yellow petticoat, fluttering white apron, embroidered bodice.

"My mom made it."

"Even the embroidery?"

"Sure. She stayed up till four o'clock to get it done the night before."

There was further whirling and stomping to show it off. The dishes tinkled on the shelves. I applauded some more. Both of us wanted only one thing. We wanted the doctor to turn around and stop ignoring us. For him to say, even grudgingly, one polite word.

"And lookit what else," Mary said. "For a Valentine." She tore open the cardboard box and there were Valentine cookies, all cut into heart shapes and plastered with thick red icing.

"How splendid," I said, and Mary resumed her prancing:

I am the Captain of the Pinafore.  
And a right good captain, too.  
You're very very good, and be it understood,  
I command a right good crew.

The doctor turned at last, and she saluted him.

"All right," he said. "That's enough." She ignored him:

Then give three cheers and one cheer more  
For the hardy captain of the Pinafore.

"I said that's enough."

"For the captain of the Pinafore—"

"Mary. We are eating supper. And you are not invited. Do you understand that? Not invited."

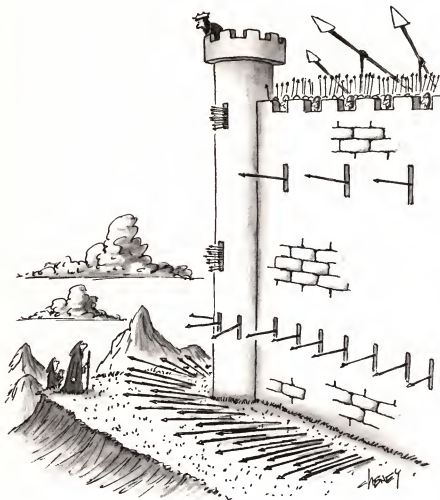
She was quiet at last. But only for a moment.

"Well, pooh on you, then. You're not very nice."

"And you could just as well do without any of those cookies. You're on your way to getting as plump as a young pig."

Mary's face was puffed up as if she were about to cry, but instead she said,





*"I wish I could help, but all your tax dollars were used in defense spending."*

"Look who's talking. You got one eye crooked to the other."

"That's enough."

"Well, you have."

The doctor picked up her boots and set them down in front of her.

"Put these on."

She did so, with her eyes full of tears and her nose running. She snuffled mightily. He picked up her coat and did not help her as she flailed her way into it and found the buttons.

"That's right. Now, how did you get here?"

She refused to answer.

"Walked, did you? Well, I can drive you home. So you don't get a chance to fling yourself into a snowbank and freeze to death out of self-pity."

I did not say a word. Mary did not look at me once. The moment was too full of shock for goodbyes.

When I heard the car start, I began clearing the table. We had not got to dessert, which was apple pie again. Perhaps he did not know of any other kind, or perhaps it was all the bakery made.

I picked up one of the heart-shaped cookies and ate it. The icing was horribly sweet. No berry or cherry flavor, just sugar and red food coloring. I ate another and another.

I knew that I should have said goodbye at least. I should have said thank you for the cookies. But it wouldn't have mattered. I told myself that it wouldn't have mattered. The performance had not been for me. Or perhaps only a small part of it had been for me.

He had been brutal. It shocked me that he had been so brutal. To one so much in need. But he had done it for me, in a way. So that his time with me should not be taken away. This

thought flattered me, and I was ashamed that it flattered me. I did not know what I would say to him when he got back.

He did not want me to say anything. He took me to bed. Had this been in the cards all along, or was it as much of a surprise to him as it was to me? My state of virginity, at least, did not appear to be unexpected—he provided a towel, as well as a condom—and he persisted, going as easily as he could. My passion was the surprise, to us both.

"I do intend to marry you," he said.

Before he took me home, he tossed all the cookies, all those red hearts, out into the snow to feed the winter birds.

So it was settled. Our engagement—though he was a little wary of the word—was a private agreed-upon fact. The wedding would take place whenever he could get a couple of consecutive days off. A bare-bones wedding, he said. I was not to write a word to my grandparents. I was to understand that the idea of a ceremony, carried on in the presence of others whose ideas he did not respect, and who would inflict on us all that snickering and simpering, was more than he was prepared to put up with.

Nor was he in favor of diamond rings. I told him that I had never wanted one, which was true, because I had never thought about it. He said that was good. He had known that I was not that sort of idiotic, conventional girl.

It would be better to stop having supper together, he said, not just because of the talk but because it was hard to get enough meat for two people on one ration card. My card was not available, having been handed over to the kitchen authorities—to Mary's mother—as soon as I began to eat at the San.

Better not to call attention.

Of course, everybody suspected something. The elderly nurses turned cordial, and even Matron gave me a pained smile. I did preen in a modest way, almost without meaning to. I took to folding myself in, with a velvet stillness, eyes rather cast down. It did not quite occur to me that these older women were watching to see what direction this intimacy might take

and that they were ready to turn righteous if the doctor should decide to drop me.

It was the aides who were wholeheartedly on my side, and teased me that they saw wedding bells in my tea leaves.

The month of March was grim and busy behind the hospital doors. It was always the worst month, the aides said. For some reason, people took it into their heads to die then, after making it through the attacks of winter. If a child did not show up for class, I did not know if there had been a major turn for the worse or just a bedding down with the suspicion of a cold.

Time was found, however, for the doctor to make some arrangements. He slipped a note under the door of my room, instructing me to be ready by the first week of April. Unless there was some real crisis, he could manage a couple of days then.

We are going to Huntsville.

*Going to Huntsville*—our code for getting married.

I have my green crêpe, dry-cleaned and rolled up carefully in my overnight bag. I suppose I will have to change my clothes in some ladies' toilet. I am watching to see if there are any early wildflowers along the road that I can pick to make a bouquet. Would he agree to my having a bouquet? But it's too early even for marsh marigolds. Nothing is to be seen but skinny black spruce trees and islands of spreading juniper and bogs. And, in the road cuts, a chaotic jumble of the rocks that have become familiar to me here—blood-stained iron and slanting shelves of granite.

The car radio is on and playing triumphal music, because the Allies are getting closer and closer to Berlin. The doctor says that they are delaying to let the Russians get there first. He says they'll be sorry.

Now that we are away from Amundsen, I find that I can call him Alister. This is the longest drive we have ever taken together, and I am aroused by his male unawareness of me—which I know can quickly shift to its opposite—and by his casual skill as a driver. I find it exciting that he is a surgeon, though I would never admit that. Right now, I believe I would lie

down for him in any bog or mucky hole or feel my spine crushed against any roadside rock, should he require an upright encounter. I know, too, that I must keep these feelings to myself.

I turn my mind to the future. Once we get to Huntsville, I expect that we will find a minister and stand side by side in a living room, which will have the modest gentility of the living rooms I have known all my life.

But, when we get there, I discover that there are other ways to get married, and that my bridegroom has another aversion that I hadn't grasped. He won't have anything to do with a minister. At the town hall in Huntsville, we fill out forms that swear to our single state and we make an appointment to be married by a justice of the peace.

Time for lunch. Alister stops outside a restaurant that could be a first cousin to the coffee shop in Amundsen.

"This'll do?"

But, on looking into my face, he does change his mind.

"No?" he says. "O.K."

We end up eating lunch in the chilly front room of one of the genteel houses that advertise chicken dinners. The plates are icy cold, there are no other diners, and there is no radio music but only the clink of our cutlery as we try to separate parts of the stringy chicken. I am sure he is thinking that we might have done better in the restaurant he suggested in the first place.

Nonetheless, I find the nerve to ask about the ladies' room, and there, in cold air even more discouraging than that of the front room, I shake out my green dress and put it on, repaint my mouth, and fix my hair.

When I come out, Alister stands up to greet me and smiles and squeezes my hand and says I look pretty.

We walk stiffly back to the car, holding hands. He opens the door for me, goes around and gets in, settles himself and turns the key in the ignition, then turns it off.

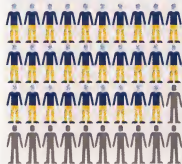
The car is parked in front of a hardware store. Snow shovels are on sale at half price. There is still a sign in the window that says that skates can be sharpened inside.

Across the street there is a wooden house painted an oily yellow. Its front

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steps have become unsafe, and two boards forming an X have been nailed across them.

The truck parked in front of Alistair's car is a prewar model, with a running board and a fringe of rust on its fenders. A man in overalls comes out of the hardware store and gets into it. After some engine complaint, then some rattling and bounding in place, it is driven away. Now a delivery truck with the store's name on it tries to park in the space left vacant. There is not quite enough room. The driver gets out and comes and raps on Alistair's window. Alistair is surprised—if he had not been talking so earnestly he would have noticed the problem. He rolls down the window, and the man asks if we are parked there because we intend to buy something in the store. If not, could we please move along?

"Just leaving," says Alistair, the man sitting beside me who was going to marry me but now is not going to marry me. "We were just leaving."

We. He has said "we." For a moment, I cling to that word. Then I think, It's the last time. The last time I'll be included in his "we."

It's not the "we" that matters; that is not what makes the truth clear to me. It's his male-to-male tone with the driver, his calm and reasonable apology. I almost wish now to go back to what he was saying before, when he did not even notice the van trying to park. What he was saying then was terrible but at least his tight grip on the wheel, his grip and his abstraction and his voice had pain in them. No matter what he was saying, he was speaking out of the same deep place then that he spoke from when he was in bed with me. But it is not so now, after he has spoken to another man. He rolls up the window and gives all his attention to the car, to backing it out of its tight spot and moving it so as not to come in contact with the van, as if there were no more to be said or managed.

"I can't do it," he has said.

He can't go through with it.

He can't explain this.

Only that he feels it would be a mistake.

It occurs to me that I will never be able to look at curly "S"s like those on the skate-sharpening sign, or at

rough boards knocked into an X, like those across the steps of the yellow house, without hearing this voice.

"I'm going to drive you to the station now. I'll buy your ticket to Toronto. I'm pretty sure there's a train to Toronto late in the afternoon. I'll think up some very plausible story and I'll get somebody to pack up your things. You'll need to give me your Toronto address. I don't think I've kept it. Oh, and I'll write you a reference. You've done a good job. You wouldn't have finished out the term anyway—I hadn't told you yet but the children are going to be moved to another sanatorium. All kinds of big changes going on."

A new tone in his voice, almost jaunty. A tone of relief. He is trying to hold that in, not let the relief out until I am gone.

I watch the streets. It's like being driven to my own execution. Not yet. A little while yet. Not yet do I hear his voice for the last time. Not yet.

He doesn't have to ask the way to the station. I wonder out loud if he has put girls on the train before.

"Don't be like that," he says.

Every turn is like a shearing off of what's left of my life.

There is a train to Toronto at five o'clock. I wait in the car, while he goes in to check. He comes out with the ticket in his hand and what I think is a lighter step. He must realize this, because as he approaches the car he becomes more sedate.

"It's nice and warm in the station. There's a special ladies' waiting room."

He has opened the car door for me.

"Or would you rather I waited and saw you off? Maybe there's a place where we can get a decent piece of pie. That was a horrible dinner."

This makes me stir myself. I get out and walk ahead of him into the station. He points out the ladies' waiting room. He raises his eyebrow at me and tries to make a final joke.

"Maybe someday you'll count this one of the luckiest days of your life."

I choose a bench in the waiting room that has a view of the station's front doors. So that I'll be able to see him if he comes back. Perhaps he will tell me that this was all a joke. Or a test, as in

some medieval drama. Or perhaps he will have a change of heart. Driving down the highway, seeing the pale spring sunlight on the rocks that we so recently looked at together. Struck by the realization of his folly, he will turn and come speeding back.

It is an hour at least before the Toronto train comes into the station, but it seems hardly any time at all. And even now fantasies are running through my mind. I board the train as if there were chains on my ankles. I press my face to the window to look along the platform as the whistle blows for our departure. It is not too late for me to jump from the train. Jump free and run through the station to the street, where he has just parked the car and is bounding up the steps, thinking. Not too late, pray not too late.

Me running to meet him. Not too late.

Now there is a commotion, shouting, hollering, not one but a gaggle of latecomers pounding between the seats. High-school girls in athletic outfits, hooting at the trouble they have caused. The conductor displeased and hurrying them along as they scramble for their seats.

One of them, and perhaps the loudest, is Mary.

I turn my head and do not look at them again.

But here she is, crying out my name and wanting to know where I have been.

To visit a friend, I tell her.

She plunks herself down beside me and tells me that they have been playing basketball against Huntsville. It was a riot. They lost.

"We lost, didn't we?" she calls out in apparent delight, and others groan and giggle. She mentions the score, which is indeed quite shocking.

"You're all dressed up," she says. But she doesn't much care; she seems to take my explanation without real interest.

She barely notices when I say that I am going on to Toronto to see my grandparents. Not a word about Alistair. Not even a bad word. She has not forgotten. Just tidied up the scene and put it away, in a closet with her other former selves. Or maybe she really is a person who can deal recklessly with humiliation.

I am grateful to her now, even if I was not able to feel such a thing at the time. Left to myself, what might I have done when we got to Amundsen? Abandoned the train and run to his house and demanded to know why, why. What shame on me forever.

As it was, the stop there was barely long enough for the team to get themselves collected, while being warned by the conductor that if they didn't get a move on they would be riding to Toronto.

For years, I thought I might run into him. I lived, and still live, in Toronto. It seemed to me that everybody ended up in Toronto, at least for a little while.

Then, more than a decade later, it finally happened. Crossing a crowded street where we could not even slow down. Going in opposite directions. Staring, at the same time, a bald shock on our time-damaged faces.

He called out, "How are you?" and I answered, "Fine." Then added, for good measure, "Happy."

At the time, this was only generally true. I was having some kind of dragged-out row with my husband, about our paying a debt run up by one of his children. I had gone that afternoon to a show at the Art Gallery, to get myself into a more comfortable frame of mind.

He called back to me once more. "Good for you," he said.

It still seemed as if we would make our way out of that crowd, as if in just a moment we would be together. But it was just as certain, also, that we would carry on in the directions we were going, and so we did.

No breathless cry, no hand on my shoulder when I reached the sidewalk. Just the flash that I had caught when one of his eyes opened wider than the other. It was the left eye—always the left, as I remembered. And it always looked so strange, alert and wondering, as if some crazy impossibility had occurred to him that almost made him laugh.

That was all. I went on home.

Feeling the same as when I'd left Amundsen. The train dragging me, disbelieving. Nothing changes, apparently, about love. ♦

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## THE CRITICS



A CRITIC AT LARGE

## THE ESCAPE ARTIST

*The death and life of Stefan Zweig.*

BY LEO CAREY

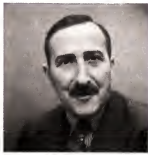
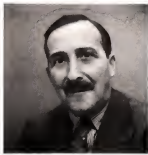
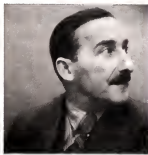
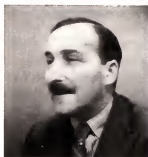
On February 22, 1942, the Austrian writer Stefan Zweig and his second wife went to the bedroom of a rented house in Petrópolis, Brazil. They lay down—she in a kimono, he in a shirt and tie—after taking an enormous dose of barbiturates. When news of their suicides broke, it was reported as a matter of worldwide significance. The New York Times carried the news on its front page, alongside reports of the rout of Japanese forces in Bali and of a broadcast address by President Roosevelt. An editorial the next day, titled “One of the Dispossessed,” saw in Zweig’s final act “the problems of the exile for conscience sake.” Zweig, a Jew, had left Austria in 1934, living in England and New York before the final move to Brazil, and his work had been banned and vilified across the German-speaking world. In his suicide note, he spoke of “my own language having disappeared from me and my spiritual home, Europe, having destroyed itself.” He concluded, “I salute all my friends! May it be granted them yet to see the dawn after the long night! I, all too impatient, go on before.”

Zweig’s death arguably marked the high point of his literary standing: to most English-speaking readers, he is now little more than a name. Yet, for a time, in the nineteen-twenties and thirties, he was the most translated writer in Europe. Along with the fiction and the biographies on which his reputation chiefly rests, he produced a seemingly effortless stream of plays, translations, poems, travelogues, and essays—on subjects ranging from manuscripts to Moscow theatre. An energetic

literary spokesman and PEN member, he lectured, in several languages, around the world. He also championed many other writers, helping them financially and with glowing appraisals of their work.

Beside contemporaries like Thomas Mann and Joseph Roth, Zweig can seem like an also-ran; he left no single, defining masterwork. But, in the past few years, it’s become possible to appreciate anew the variety and ambition of his writing. New York Review Books and Pushkin Press have reissued most of Zweig’s important fiction, often in fine new translations by Anthea Bell, and a number of his biographical studies. They have also published translations—the first ever—of an abandoned novel, “The Post-Office Girl,” and of a long-lost novella, “Journey into the Past.”

Now Pushkin Press has released a revealing new biography of Zweig, “Three Lives,” by Oliver Matuschek (translated from the German, by Allan Blunden). The story of Zweig’s life has always been dominated by the version of it he told in his memoir, “The World of Yesterday,” one of his best-known works. Completed less than a year before Zweig killed himself, “The World of Yesterday” is less an autobiography—he mentions his two marriages only in passing—than a manifesto about his era. He portrays himself as an idealist, devoted to the cause of international brotherhood, even as Europe collapses around him. Subsequent books largely bolstered this narrative—first, memoirs by Zweig’s first wife, Friderike; then, in 1972, a comprehensive biography by D. A. Prater, produced under Friderike’s



*Zweig painstakingly cultivated his image as a*

watchful eye. But Matuschek shows the extent to which Zweig’s public façade masked a tormented and unpredictable private self. The Zweig that emerges isn’t quite the moral authority he avowedly aspired to be. He’s far more lively and human, and his frailties, rather than his noble aspirations, emerge as the source of his best work.

The defining fact of Stefan Zweig’s life was the great wealth to which he was born. This gave him the freedom to arrange his existence as he wished, shuttling restlessly around Europe and maintaining a careful independence

ABOVE: PHILIP WEBBECKER. OPPOSITE: COURTESY ATLANTIC PRESS





*supremely civilized man of letters, but his most memorable work draws its power from the frail, tormented self that lay beneath.*

from personal and professional ties. A friend once remarked that, no matter where you met Zweig, his manner suggested a half-packed suitcase in the next room. He was born in Vienna in 1881, the second son of a successful textile manufacturer and a woman from an Italian-Jewish banking family. While still at school, he began submitting poems and articles to literary journals and sending off ingratiating letters to the great literary men of his day. He also started a manuscript collection: by the time he was sixteen, he owned material by Goethe and Beethoven, and over the years the collection became one of the

most important in Europe, containing such treasures as a catalogue of Mozart's works in the composer's own hand and Beethoven's writing desk. Zweig wrote that his collecting grew out of his fascination with "the biographical and psychological aspects of the creation of a work of art." Friderike took a subtly different view, noting that it manifested a desire for "escape from everyday things into the realm of great achievement, evident in his whole mode of life."

When he was still a university student, Zweig published his first volume of poetry, and his work appeared in the most illustrious Viennese newspaper of

the day. (Theodor Herzl was his editor.) His success persuaded his parents that he could be excused from working in the family business. He went on from Vienna to study in Berlin, and was stimulated by its seedy social life, a stark contrast to Vienna's religion of bourgeois propriety. So began a mode of life that continued for a decade or more—a quiet bachelor existence in Vienna interspersed with sojourns abroad, making the acquaintance of important artistic figures of the day. In Brussels, he befriended the French-Belgian poet Émile Verhaeren and immediately set about translating his works; in Paris, he got to know Rainer

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Maria Rilke and Romain Rolland. He met Rodin, Yeats, Pirandello, Valéry, and many others. It is tempting to see his sedulous gathering of eminent friendships as a counterpart of his manuscript collecting.

In "The World of Yesterday," the chapter covering this period is titled "Detours on the Way to Myself." Zweig writes that "my life was still governed in some odd way by the idea that everything was only temporary. Nothing that I did, I told myself, was the real thing—not in my work, which I regarded as just experimenting to discover my true bent, not the women with whom I was on friendly terms." But, though a good deal of the early work feels tentative, most of it was successful at the time, and he quickly achieved considerable celebrity. After poetry, he tried drama, and his memoir has several faux-ingenuous descriptions of how, having sent this or that play to a theatre, he was amazed when the theatre decided to put it on, or by the public acclaim that followed. He also wrote his first novellas, a form that came to dominate his fictional output.

Zweig called the novella "my beloved but unfortunate format, too long for a newspaper or magazine, too short for a book." But in German literature, which largely missed out on big nineteenth-century novels, it's a genre with a venerable literary pedigree—invented, more or less, by Goethe, and refined by figures like Heinrich von Kleist and Paul Heyse. The novella's pared-down format, its atmosphere

of tightly controlled sensationalism, and its focus on a single, dramatic turning point suited Zweig's sensibility. In "The Burning Secret," the most successful of his early novellas, a young boy on vacation at a spa resort with his mother fails to realize that a man who befriends him in the hotel has done so purely to have a chance of seducing his mother. Gradually excluded from the developing relationship, the boy furiously decides to thwart the adults, while remaining innocent of the true nature of the relationship. Zweig generates tremendous suspense by evoking the perplexity of the boy's mind, as his vengeful actions threaten to have disastrous consequences that he cannot understand.

The First World War marked the point at which Zweig's love of Europe started to coalesce into something like the pacifist and internationalist creed that he later espoused in his memoir. Conscripted and assigned to work in Austria's War Archive, he was shocked by what he saw—towns laid waste on the northern edge of the Austrian Empire and mutilated soldiers in a hospital train. His response was a fervently antiwar drama, based on the life of the prophet Jeremiah, who vainly urges Jerusalem's populace to make peace with the besieging Chaldean forces. The play now seems dated and grandiloquent, but it had real impact at the time, and was described by Thomas Mann as "the most significant poetic fruit of this war I have yet seen." It couldn't be performed in



"Kip paints caves."

wartime Vienna, and Zweig travelled to Zurich to work on the first production.

In "The World of Yesterday," Zweig claims to have been immune from "the sudden patriotic intoxication" that swept the country. But, as both his biographers have shown, the real story is more nuanced. At first, he was caught up in the nationalistic fervor, publishing pro-war articles and suspending his friendships with writers in enemy countries. His turn toward pacifism, Matuschek shows, had roots in a growing despair at his own situation. Work in the archive kept him from his writing, and he was alarmed that, as the military situation worsened, more and more workers around him were being called up for the front. Matuschek gives a careful account of the strings Zweig pulled to get to Switzerland and to stay there until the end of the war, a catalogue that certainly complicates the steadfast image that Zweig projected.

Zweig's fiction, though, gave voice to all the panic and uncertainty that his memoir suppressed. In 1918, he wrote a story, "Compulsion," about an Austrian artist who has been living in Switzerland but knows that he can be called up at any time. When the dreaded papers arrive, he goes to the consulate prepared to give a high-minded speech and imagining the confrontation that will ensue. But the functionary on the other side of the desk is informal, genial, and bored: "I hope you've enjoyed your stay here in Switzerland. . . . You're really supposed to leave tomorrow, but I don't suppose it's all that urgent. Let the paint dry on your latest masterpiece. If you need another day or so to put your affairs in order, I'll take the responsibility for that. A couple of days won't matter to the Fatherland." The artist finds himself smiling politely and his convictions evaporate. He returns home, where his wife upbraids him for his spinelessness. The novella ends, somewhat didactically, with the artist regaining his pacifist resolve, but there is no missing the fact that he has arrived at it almost entirely through weakness.

The end of the war instilled a new sense of purpose in Zweig, and the following decade saw his greatest success. He married Friderike von Winternitz, an occasional writer with two children from an

unhappy first marriage; she had caught his attention in 1912 by sending him a fan letter. Moving into a palatial house in Salzburg, he decided that his long apprenticeship was finished. Over the next decade, he wrote mostly novellas and biographical essays, often linked in thematic cycles. The novellas are typically stories of obsession that move feverishly toward crises. In "Fear," an adulterous wife is driven to the point of suicide after receiving blackmail demands—ostensibly from one of her lover's other conquests, but arranged by her husband, who hopes to effect a reconciliation. In "Twenty-four Hours in the Life of a Woman," a respectable widow in her forties catches sight of a young compulsive gambler losing in a casino, sees in a flash that he will kill himself, and ends up spending the night with him in order to save him. Much of Zweig's skill resides in shrewd narrative pacing. In his memoir, he writes about drawing the reader in by cutting out as much material as possible.

Often, the stories hinge on humiliation. In "Moonbeam Alley," a man drifts into an unsavory quarter of town and goes to a bar, where he meets a prostitute who keeps hurling insults at an old man hovering timidly nearby. The old man turns out to be her husband, who blames himself for the life she leads and is desperate to win her back. A recurrent scenario involves narrators who are well-heeled and aloof (rather like Zweig) deciding to flirt with danger and surrender control. One of the purest examples is "Fantastic Night," in which a young dandy notes that he has been overtaken by a "curious paralysis of my feelings." He no longer takes genuine pleasure in his luxurious life. Even the death of an old friend doesn't grieve him:

I felt as if I were made of glass, with the world outside shining straight through me and never lingering within, and hard as I attempted on this and many similar occasions to feel something, however much I tried, through reasonable argument, to make myself feel emotion, no response came from my rigid state of mind. People parted from me, women came and went, and I felt much like a man sitting in a room with rain beating on the window panes; there was a kind of sheet of glass between me and my immediate surroundings, and my will was not strong enough to break it.

Before long, he is stumbling around a Viennese pleasure garden in pursuit of the one sensation that still stimulates him: shame. He picks up an indigent



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prostitute, allows himself to be set upon by her pimps, and, in a final ecstasy of abasement, begs them not to report him to the police. The pleasure, he says, "filled me as no emotion had ever done before."

The frequency and the intensity with which Zweig imagines situations of sexual slumming make it tempting to speculate about his life. He did not attempt to hide from Friderike the fact that his travels were often the occasion for sexual adventure, and Matuschek, digging through Zweig's youthful diaries, comes up with evidence of threesomes and possibly some homosexual contact. One acquaintance recalled, without any substantiation, that Zweig was a sexual exhibitionist. Thomas Mann, when he heard of Zweig's suicide, wrote, "I suspect that sex had reared its ugly head again, and that he feared some kind of scandal." Mann was wrong, but it's easy to see why he leaped to this conclusion when one considers a work like Zweig's poem "Ballad of a Dream," in which a dreamer sees the message "You are found

out!" on the wall in front of him and believes that "my secret vice and darkest deeds" have become visible to everyone. At the very least, Zweig's nocturnal wanderings surely account for the nightmarish atmosphere of furtiveness that underlies much of his work.

Sometimes in the novellas there's a danger that the schematic will overwhelm the free play of human idiosyncrasy, leaving us with something that feels glib and contrived. Zweig's habit of pointing up morals at every turn must have seemed a little dated even when he was writing, but it also gives his writing its distinctive feel. The reader is almost always half inside the characters' turmoil and half outside, observing them. For Zweig, behavior is contingent on circumstance: time and again, protagonists declare themselves powerless to change a course of action. Seen this way, the programmatic shape of much of his work results from an intuition about human weakness. "Compulsion," the title of his wartime novella, would be an apt title for almost everything he wrote.

Zweig's ability to trace the patterns in human lives is also strongly apparent in his short biographical essays. In the current Zweig revival, these have so far been comparatively neglected, but they are some of his best work. The start of his essay on Kleist vividly conjures the life of the tortured German writer by itemizing his travels for a page and a half:

There was no point of the compass toward which Kleist did not travel in Germany, nor any town of note in which he, a homeless wanderer, did not sojourn for a time. . . . From Berlin he drove by diligence to Dresden, into the Erzgebirge, to Bayreuth, to Chemnitz; then he was off again to Würzburg; thereafter, athwart Napoleonic campaigns, to Paris. He had planned to spend a year in the French capital, but within a few weeks he set out for Switzerland, moving from Berne to Thun, to Basel, and then back to Berne. . . . He zig-zagged back to Dresden, whence, during the full blast of the Austrian campaign, he started for Vienna, was arrested at Aspern while the battle was in progress, but escaped, and fled to Prague. Sometimes he vanished like a river that runs underground, to emerge at an immense distance; but always, again and again, a sort of gravitational force drew him back to Berlin. . . . Nowhere could he rest. For the last time, therefore, he climbed into a post-chaise (which had been his only true home during the thirty-four years of his life) and drove to Potsdam, where, beside the Wannsee, he blew out his brains. He was buried by the roadside.

This feat of compression—the evocation, through an itinerary, of a whole existence—gets close to the heart of Zweig's sensibility. As in his novellas, his fixation on extreme psychological states coexists with something more distanced. Zweig relishes both the tumult of feeling and the way that even the most inchoate emotions, seen from the outside, tend to form a pattern. And, of course, a similarly expressive list could be made of Zweig's own wanderings: Ostend, Zurich, Calcutta, London, Bath, Moscow, Ossining, Rio, Buenos Aires, Trépolis. Hermann Hesse called him the Flying Salzburger.

At the height of his career, Zweig was an object of admiration, envy, condescension, and outright contempt. In German literature, the boundary between the commercial and the worthy has tended to be more stringently policed than in English, and for many the popularity of Zweig's books was automatic cause for suspicion. One contemporary critic called them "railway-carriage reading." The great poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal, whom Zweig tried and failed to cultivate, considered Zweig's career, in

its precocity and range, a plagiarism of his own career. (The joke was on him: after Hofmannsthal died, Richard Strauss, needing a new librettist for his operas, got in touch with Zweig.) Even among Zweig's friends, an edge of irony crept in when describing his carefully husbanded success. One wrote:

In every city of more than 5,000 inhabitants this unobtrusive, smooth character had a friend—bookseller, member of the local literary society, editor of the local paper—who would be waiting on the platform when Zweig arrived, introduce his lecture, and write the dihyrambic feuilleton for the next day's local journal.

The years of comfort and eminence came to an abrupt end with Hitler's rise to power, in 1933. Zweig's books were widely denounced and later banned. National Socialists were on the rise in Austria, too, agitating for a union with Germany. During political disturbances early in 1934, policemen arrived at Zweig's house, demanding to search it for weapons. As soon as they had gone, Zweig packed his bags for London, where he

had recently rented an apartment, and he never lived in Austria again. In his memoir, he wrote, "Behind this intrinsically insignificant episode I sensed the present gravity of the state of affairs in Austria, and saw what enormous pressure Germany was putting on us."

As usual with Zweig, though, there was a personal reason for his departure: a desire to escape his marriage. Zweig treated Friderike as a secretary, loathed her daughters, and was constitutionally unsuited for marital life: he once threatened to shoot himself if Friderike became pregnant. Now he wrapped up his life in Austria hastily, dispersing his papers and selling off most of his manuscript collection. Soon after settling in London, he began an affair with his secretary, a sickly young woman named Lotte Altmann, who became his second wife.

Zweig, as a prominent literary exile, was often asked to lend his voice to anti-Nazi and Jewish causes. He was anything but outspoken, however, and his silence frustrated other writers of the time and has

been much criticized since. Klaus Mann, who failed to get him to contribute to an émigré journal he was running, was disparaging of Zweig's decision to remain "objective," "understanding," and "just toward the deadly enemy." Hannah Arendt, reviewing Zweig's memoir years after his death, wrote that "not one of his reactions during all this period was the result of political convictions." Zweig tried to justify his silence, writing in his memoir, "I hate emotional public gestures on principle," and adding that he didn't want to make trouble for Richard Strauss, just before the premiere of their opera. He seems to have clung to the hope that, if he didn't draw attention to himself, his work could somehow continue unimpeded, and his actions at this time hint at deep denial. One bizarre detail mentioned by Matuschek is that, in 1933, Zweig, ever the diligent collector, bought the thirteen-page manuscript of a speech by Hitler.

Starting in the early nineteen-thirties, Zweig wrote a number of full-length biographies, mostly of historical figures caught

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in perilous times—Erasmus, Mary Queen of Scots, and (the best of them) Marie Antoinette. He also completed two of his finest pieces of fiction, "Beware of Pity," his only completed novel, and the novella "Chess Story" (also known in English as "The Royal Game"). Crisis had always been Zweig's subject, but in his years of greatest success he had tended to handle it by means of plots that operate slightly too efficiently. Now, in genuine crisis himself, he produced work more compelling than anything that had come before.

In "Chess Story," a group of men on an ocean liner bound for South America find that a great chess master is aboard and form a team to play him. At first, he easily defeats them; then, during a rematch, a stranger appears and prevents the opponents from making a disastrous move. The stranger takes control and manages to force a draw. Later, he tells the narrator his story: an Austrian lawyer, he was arrested by the Nazis, interrogated, and kept in solitary confinement. To while away the hours, he memorized a compendium of great chess games and played them in his head. He progressed to playing games against himself, splitting his mind down the middle, the stress of which brought him close to breakdown. The next day, on the ship, he beats the chess master, but between moves he starts to pace, his steps marking out the dimensions of his former cell. The chess master, noticing that his opponent becomes discomposed when he is forced to wait, exploits this weakness in their second match. As he draws out his moves to unendurable lengths, the stranger appears to enter into a feverish combat with himself:

From one pause to the next our friend's behavior became ever more bizarre. He no longer seemed to be taking part in the game: he was involved in something quite different. He had left off his excited pacing and sat motionless in his chair. Staring before him with a vacant, almost crazed expression, he murmured incomprehensible words to himself in a continuous stream; either he was engrossed in an endless calculation of moves, or else (this was my deepest suspicion) he was working out entirely different games. . . . I was beginning to suspect that he had actually long since forgotten . . . the rest of us in this quiet madness.

This is melodrama, but of a very high order—the tension of the narrative rising inexorably with the stranger's gathering psychosis. There is an unmistakable urgency, too. It feels less finished and re-

served, more naked, than almost anything else Zweig wrote. Biographical readings are perilous, but with Zweig, a master biographer, they seem essential, and it is hard not to see in this story of mental disintegration a self-portrait. Its author had recently sailed to South America, where he relieved the isolation of his new life by playing his way through a book of famous chess games. He mailed the final typescript of the story to his publishers the day before he killed himself.

Zweig had spent his life running away from home, but once exile became a way of life—once there was no secure base from which to escape—the strain wore on him. He lived his final years in a state of continual flight. He secured British citizenship, but then decamped with Lotte to New York. The city, full of refugee intellectuals, should have been ideal, but it depressed Zweig: there was no respite from brooding about the fate of Europe. After a tour of South America, he decided that Brazil would be a fresh start. (He even wrote a book in its praise, "Brazil: A Land of the Future.") But it's hard to imagine anyone less suited to life there. The recently collected "Stefan and Lotte Zweig's South American Letters," edited by Darién J. Davis and Oliver Marshall (Continuum), gives a picture of the daily trials the couple endured. Zweig was isolated from everything that gave his life meaning, deprived of books and like-minded colleagues; the climate was bad for his spirits and for Lotte's fragile health. Furthermore, Brazil was a dictatorship, with growing anti-Semitic leanings. The regime was proud that a famous writer had taken refuge there, but Zweig was attacked for his apparent complicity.

In "The World of Yesterday," which he completed in Brazil, he gives a chilling assessment of the hopes that refugees placed in the New World. He recalls seeing a group of European Jews in London—"ghosts" amid the "pitiful ruins of their lives"—frantically trying to obtain passage to various distant countries. He sees a man he knows, a prominent Viennese industrialist and art collector, who hopes to get a visa for Haiti or Santo Domingo. "It wrung my heart," he writes, "an old exhausted man with children and grandchildren, trembling with the hope of moving to a country he could hardly even have located on the map, just so that

he could go on begging his way there, a stranger without any real aim left in life!" This withering objectivity about the futility of the situation is perhaps what enabled Zweig to give up the struggle.

Zweig's stock-in-trade was reading human lives, both historical and fictional, in search of a moral. His life, ending as it did, acquired just such a meaning, becoming a cautionary tale about the fate of the artist in the face of totalitarianism and coloring all subsequent views of his work. But, just as his pacifism in the First World War and his flight from an Austria imperilled by Fascism had both principled causes and personal ones, so, too, the public message of his suicide note tells only one side of the story. Matuschek's biography makes especially clear how much depression afflicted Zweig throughout his adult life. He had often spoken of killing himself, and twice, in the grip of despair, had asked Friderike to join him in death. In his work, suicide is everywhere, and often closely linked to exile. In "Twilight," a novella written when he was still in his twenties, a lady at the court of Louis XV is banished from Versailles and kills herself, unable to tolerate her provincial new life in Normandy. In the unfinished novel "The Post-Office Girl," a young woman starts to plan a suicide pact with a disaffected young man, after her rich relatives briefly treat her to a luxurious life and then drop her. In the short story "Incident on Lake Geneva," a Russian soldier, displaced during the First World War and desperate to return home, wades into the lake and drowns. Zweig's demise is a story he had told many times.

If Zweig's death wasn't quite the political act it seemed, the popularity of that interpretation is understandable. A man in whom genuine modesty and a genius for self-publicity existed side by side, Zweig spent his life backing into the limelight, and his death followed the same pattern. The day after their bodies were discovered, Stefan and Lotte Zweig were given a state funeral. President Getúlio Vargas attended, along with his ministers of state. Petrópolis shuttered its shops as the cortège passed and deposited Stefan and Lotte in a plot near the mausoleum of Brazil's former royal family. A day or so later, a friend received a farewell letter from Zweig, asking that his burial "should be as modest and private as possible." ♦

## BRIEFLY NOTED

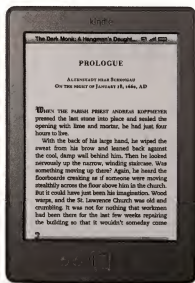
**Seating Arrangements**, by Maggie Shipstead (*Knopf*). In Shipstead's satirical debut novel, set on a fictional island reminiscent of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, the main characters think of themselves in terms not of adjectives but of proper nouns: Deerfield, Harvard, southwest Connecticut, the Pequot Golf Club. For Winn Van Meter, three days spent on the island, ostensibly in celebration of his oldest daughter's wedding, are just as much an occasion to appraise his social circle and gauge his eligibility for yet more refined ones. Shipstead seems at home in the WASPY milieu of private schools and their preening, privileged attendees. What the plot at times lacks in momentum is made up for in a keen-eyed rendering of America's self-invented caste, its members' revelry in an illusory "axis of perfect exclusivity" and their pitiful strivings "to be aristocrats" in a country that was built on anti-aristocratic convictions.

**Say Nice Things About Detroit**, by Scott Lasser (*Norton*). Families struggling for stability amid the recession in Detroit ought to provide copious fodder for any author. But Scott Lasser, who grew up in the Motor City, fails to satisfy as he grapples with the material in his new novel. David, a damaged protagonist, goes home to Detroit to care for his aging mother. His return coincides with the murder of his high-school girlfriend and her half brother, and this crime highlights the decline of the city as David considers making a new home there. Lasser holds up Detroit as a paragon of urban authenticity, but his hometown pride has no feeling of intimacy and seems burdened by a self-conscious sense of what the city has come to represent. "For me, this is the only real place," David says in the novel, but for the reader the city remains disappointingly factitious.

**Straphanger**, by Taras Grescoe (*Times*). This paean to public transportation is front-loaded with statistics edifying to city dwellers and their soapboxes. American households average eleven car trips each day. Nine out of ten American commuters drive to work, three-quarters of them alone. Buying a car, Grescoe writes, "is the beginning of a spiral through selfishness, road rage, and anomie, one whose ultimate goal is the mall and the gated community." Any overreach in tone, however, dissipates quickly, as the book unfurls into studies of a dozen cities around the world. Grescoe travels on foot (and by public transit) in Bogotá and Moscow. In Los Angeles, he details backroom deals that helped doom the adoption of streetcars there; in New York, he describes a subway prototype, from 1870, constructed inside a huge pneumatic tube. In Paris, he visits an empty, shuttered Métro station that looks like a time capsule either of the urban past or of its future.

**Mozart at the Gateway to His Fortune**, by Christoph Wolff (*Norton*). In this engrossing study of the last four years of Mozart's life, Wolff argues against the common conception that the composer's mysterious death was "foreshadowed by, and reflected in, some characteristics of his late work." Though Mozart struggled during these years with almost constant insolvency and a string of personal tragedies, the end of his life was not, Wolff writes, "a time determined by resignation, hopelessness, and desolation" but, rather, a "new beginning." In 1787, a lucrative and prestigious sinecure from Emperor Joseph II reinvigorated him. The innovative and prolific activity that followed this—in 1791 alone, Mozart completed twenty-three major works—suggests a restless composer "looking ahead," and not one arriving at a "sense of closure in his art toward the end of his life." Wolff perhaps exaggerates the effect of the imperial appointment, but his book yields rich insights into some of Mozart's most important music.

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## FRESH BREEZES

*An impressive debut and new works at Tanglewood.*

BY ALEX ROSS

*The Boston Symphony, in Tanglewood's Music Shed. Photograph by Tobias Hutzler.*

It is said that Serge Koussevitzky, the Russian-Jewish émigré who led the Boston Symphony from 1924 to 1949, had trouble reading complex new scores. He wallowed in sentiment, Stravinsky complained. He was imperious, sometimes cruel. Nonetheless, he elicited performances of voluptuous intensity—"Such a bad conductor, and the orchestra plays so well," Toscanini supposedly said—and when he died, in 1951, he left behind a vital legacy. One of the architects of the modern repertory, Koussevitzky introduced or commissioned hundreds of works, including Stravinsky's "Symphony of Psalms," Bartók's Concerto for Orchestra, Britten's "Peter Grimes," and Messiaen's "Turangalila Symphony." He was a father figure for Aaron Copland and other American composers, saying, "Dee next Beethoven vill from Colorado come." And in the Tanglewood festival, the Boston Symphony's summertime home in the Berkshires, Koussevitzky created a singular institution that combines an élite music school with a populist open-air series. If conductors are judged not as metrical disciplinarians but as

shapers of musical life, Koussevitzky might have been the greatest of them all.

Tanglewood—the name comes from Nathaniel Hawthorne, who once lived on the grounds—celebrated its seventy-fifth anniversary in July. It emerged from the Berkshire Symphonic Festival, which originally offered the New York Philharmonic as its main attraction. Gertrude Robinson Smith, a formidable local philanthropist who campaigned for women's welfare and reportedly threw a mean curveball, was the festival's leading patron, and when the Philharmonic lost interest Smith turned instead to Koussevitzky, who seized on her notion that the enterprise could become an American version of the Salzburg Festival. Indeed, Koussevitzky imagined something better: low-priced, high-calibre concerts around which composers, conductors, performers, and scholars would gather to train the next generation. Tanglewood would be, in Koussevitzky's words, a "radiation of the beams of high culture over a nation and the whole world."

This Emersonian utopia never fully materialized. One setback came when the Boston Symphony's board rejected Leon-

ard Bernstein, Koussevitzky's protégé, as his successor, instead choosing the more manageable French maestro Charles Munch. The Munch years hardly lacked for brilliant playing or lively programs, and Seiji Ozawa, who arrived in 1973, after briefer tenures by Erich Leinsdorf and William Steinberg, further expanded Tanglewood's scope. There was a sense, though, that the Koussevitzky ideal was fading. In 1979, the composer Gunther Schuller, then the co-director of Tanglewood's education wing, declared that the typical American orchestra had become a soulless mechanism, hostile to creativity. "The light has gone out of their eyes," Schuller said of the musicians. Although he avoided naming names, Boston seemed to be his chief exhibit. Ozawa stayed until 2002, his later years marred by uneven performances and by unrest among the Tanglewood faculty. There ensued the short, sad reign of James Levine: aglow with promise for the first couple of years, then increasingly fretful as Levine's health problems took him away for long stretches.

Last year, Levine belatedly resigned, leaving an artistic vacuum. Uncertainty shadowed the anniversary gala, at which Yo-Yo Ma, John Williams, and James Taylor took turns in the spotlight, with seventeen thousand spectators filling the Music Shed and the lawn outside. The search for Levine's successor is ongoing: the job is a huge one, requiring charisma, imagination, and organizational flair in equal measure. The fact that no clear-cut candidate has appeared should not stop the orchestra from taking a chance on a relative unknown. Who could have guessed, after all, that an émigré double-bass player turned conductor would make so much of a soggy farm in the Berkshires?

One conductor receiving close scrutiny in Boston is the thirty-three-year-old Latvian maestro Andris Nelsons, who is presently the music director of the City of Birmingham Symphony, in England. Nelsons had his first outing with the Bostonians in March, 2011, at Carnegie Hall, substituting on short notice for Levine. I missed that concert, but caught Nelsons's commanding New York Philharmonic debut, one month earlier, and also saw him at the 2011 Bayreuth Festival, where he delivered a blazing "Lohengrin." Evidently, the Carnegie concert pleased the management in Boston, for Nelsons was

invited to serve as one of the three conductors at the Tanglewood gala, on July 14th. The following afternoon, he had his first scheduled program with the orchestra: the "Symphony of Psalms" and Brahms's Second Symphony.

It went extremely well. In the "Psalms," Nelsons found the right balance between otherworldly serenity and earthy vigor: the winds in the second Psalm were flawlessly blended yet pungent in timbre, and the movement's penitential mood ("He brought me up also out of an horrible pit") came through in finely managed swells of dynamics and emotion. The Brahms was spacious, almost Wagnerian in places, with thematic lines singing out grandly and rhythms surging underneath. In the finale, electricity flickered through the ensemble as Nelsons pushed the tempo and punched up dynamic contrasts. The final bars were a controlled explosion.

Nelsons is fascinating to watch. His arm shoots out, then freezes; he looms over the front-chair strings, then falls into a simian crouch; he sways this way and that, audibly grunting. There is no showmanship in these gestures; rather, they seem an expression of an unchecked, visceral approach to music-making, and they keep the players productively on edge. Such physicality is, not incidentally, a Koussevitzky trait: the old man advocated "bodily freedom" in performance. Whether Nelsons possesses anything like Koussevitzky's genius for cultivating composers or building institutions remains to be seen. For the moment, he has chosen to renew his commitment to Birmingham, but more Boston dates lie ahead.

Another possible candidate is Stéphane Denève, a vigorous Frenchman who made his debut in Boston last year. On August 11th, at Tanglewood, he led a fluffy new piece by André Previn ("Music for Boston"), Elgar's Cello Concerto (with Yo-Yo Ma), and the Shostakovich Fifth. The orchestra responded energetically, but Denève's take on the Shostakovich seldom went very deep and ended in disconcertingly blatant fashion. Nelsons had the better showing: under his baton, the august Bostonians sounded as alert and alive as they did when Levine first arrived.

In the Koussevitzky days, new works mingled with established masterpieces; there was no contemporary ghetto. Then, in 1964, Tanglewood launched an annual Festival of Contemporary Music.

Schuller, that pugnacious polymath who introduced the concept of a "Third Stream" between classical composition and modern jazz, headed new-music activities at Tanglewood from 1964 to 1984, and in the late sixties he added a pop dimension, booking Janis Joplin, Jefferson Airplane, and the Who. Now eighty-six, Schuller revisited Tanglewood this summer, offering a new orchestral piece and leading an all-Charles Ives program with student musicians. Last year, he brought out "A Life in Pursuit of Music and Beauty," the first volume of his memoirs, describing his encounters with everyone from Toscanini to Duke Ellington in thrilling and exhausting detail.

Curiously, while Schuller has lavished analytical attention on richly tonal jazz harmonies, he has shown little appetite for the equivalent in the modern classical sphere. When he ran the contemporary festival at Tanglewood, there were complaints that it turned into a private conference of university atonalists. The stylistic gamut widened somewhat in the late eighties and in the nineties, when Oliver Knussen and Reinbert de Leeuw served, consecutively, as directors of the contemporary series; I attended a vibrant edition in 1994, at which hard-rocking Bang on a Can pieces abutted surrealist provocations by Mauricio Kagel and atonal edicts by Ralph Shapey. Knussen returned to lead this summer's festival-within-a-festival, declaring another ceasefire in the style wars: David Del Tredici's over-the-top neo-Romanticism shared a bill with the granite sononities of Harrison Birtwistle. Knussen's 1985 opera "Higglety Pigglety Pop!," heard here in a semi-staged version, embodied a pragmatic ideal, its dizzyingly varied compositional resources placed at the service of Maurice Sendak's bittersweet canine tale.

Knussen's programs, concentrating on British and American composers of several generations, emphasized craftsmanship above all. (I saw four out of six concerts.) The fifty-two-year-old English master George Benjamin, who in some periods of his career has been immaculate to a fault, was represented by three pieces from the past decade, including "Duet," a finely chiselled, dark-headed concerto for piano and orchestra; it foreshadows the imaginative boldness of Benjamin's first full-length opera,

"Written on Skin," which had its premiere at the Aix-en-Provence Festival, in July. (I watched a Webcast at Medici.tv.) Two composers in their early thirties, Sean Shepherd and Helen Grime, were not unlike Benjamin in the way they navigated between shimmering textures and lucid melodic lines. I was particularly taken with Grime's "Seven Pierrot Miniatures," whose plain-spoken central motif could have come from Britten. The wild card was "Inverno In-Ver," by Niccolò Castiglioni (1932-96); his antic, surrealist sensibility resembles the later style of György Ligeti, though without the formal assurance.

In some ways, the youngest-sounding composer was Schuller, whose "Dreamscape" is an eleven-minute romp. It begins with a nose-thumbing Ivesian scherzo, replete with wayward military fanfares, a mangled "Nutcracker" quotation, and yelps from the musicians. (A clarinetist yells, "No!") A dreamlike nocturne follows, giving way to a compressed finale that escalates from nebulous low-string chords to apocalyptic brass flourishes. The extravagance of the conception is of a piece with Schuller's more extended statements of recent years, notably "Where the Word Ends," which Boston played in 2009. There is nothing studied in Schuller's late-period work, and this is a good thing: he unleashes swinging choirs of horns, locomotive ostinatos, cascades of rapid figuration à la Richard Strauss. Schuller is still following twelve-tone procedures, but thinks nothing of settling on a plush C-major chord.

The Festival of Contemporary Music brought forth many memorable performances by students at the Tanglewood Music Center, as Koussevitzky's summer academy is called. At 10 A.M. on a Sunday, a trio of oboists—Paul Lueders, Angela Limoncelli, and Graham Mackenzie—joined the harpist Grace Browning to give a starkly beautiful account of Birtwistle's instrumental fragment "Dinah and Nick's Love Song"; within a minute, morning had turned to midnight. Kate Jackman touchingly incarnated Jennie, Sendak's beloved terrier, in "Higglety." At the final concert, nearly a hundred young musicians filled the stage, revelling in Schuller's dissonances and in the ripe tonalities of Del Tredici's "Happy Voices." They played, you could say, with light in their eyes. ♦

## BEDTIME STORIES

*Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's take on children's literature.*

BY HILTON ALS



*Fright night: Donna Murphy, Denis O'Hare, and Amy Adams in "Into the Woods."*

Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's "Into the Woods" (at the Delacorte, in a Public Theatre production) is a disquieting show about disquiet. At first, you may be distracted from the musical's uneasy themes by Sondheim's beautiful score, but at some point you'll likely ask yourself why Sondheim and Lapine have spent their considerable talent on this cast of characters, most of whom are not really characters at all but archetypes culled from fairy tales: Cinderella, Rapunzel, Little Red Riding Hood, and so on. These figures are, more often than not, victimized, and sometimes do terrible things themselves—but to what end? That question gets you nowhere fast. You may remind yourself that, when it comes to musical-theatre scenarios, no contem-

porary American composer has broken more rules than Sondheim. Still, humans are problem-solving animals, and, during the second half of the production, which is less crowded with incident than the first, your original question may come back to haunt you: Why does this story exist? Is it a story, or simply a structure erected to prop up the score?

Sondheim and Lapine began developing "Into the Woods" shortly after the critical success of their first collaboration, "Sunday in the Park with George," in 1984. (Lapine, who wrote the book, directed that show, as he did the premiere of "Into the Woods," in 1987.) In an interview with Craig Zadan, Lapine explained that he hadn't been crazy about Sondheim's idea for a piece about fairy

tales, because he felt that "fairy tales are very simplistic." He went on, "There's a complexity to them, but the characters are . . . not shaded. Somebody is good. Somebody is bad. Somebody is naive. They're not real, full people." It wasn't until Lapine hit upon the idea of the characters interacting that he and Sondheim felt that they had something to work with: legends in conflict with one another.

In Mark Eden Horowitz's "Sondheim on Music: Minor Details and Major Decisions," Sondheim says that "wishing is the key character" in "Into the Woods." Indeed, wishing—for love, for a child, for understanding—connects the characters not only to one another but to the audience as well. In the current production, the preadolescent Narrator (played, the night I saw the show, by Noah Radcliffe, who alternates in the role with Jack Broderick) enters a clearing that looks almost like a campsite. As designed by John Lee Beatty and Souta Gilmour, the space isn't especially ominous until the Narrator, staring straight out at the audience, speaks the first line of the play, "Once upon a time—," and Ben Stanton's lighting kicks in, as if illuminating the Narrator's hungry, spooked imagination. Suddenly, the bark on a tree suggests hatch marks, a bush resembles the head of an ogre, and the woods fill up with characters, including the Witch (Donna Murphy), Cinderella (Jessie Mueller), Cinderella's Stepmother (the outstanding Ellen Harvey), and Jack (Gideon Glick), of beanstalk fame. As the Narrator introduces us to his fantasies through speech, the others begin to build Sondheim's sonic architecture:

NARRATOR: Once upon a time—  
ALL: I WISH  
NARRATOR:—in a far-off kingdom—  
ALL: MORE THAN ANYTHING . . .  
NARRATOR:—lived a young maiden—  
CINDERELLA: MORE THAN LIFE . . .  
NARRATOR:—a sad young lad—  
CINDERELLA: MORE THAN JEWELS . . .  
JACK: I WISH  
NARRATOR:—and a childless baker—  
JACK: MORE THAN LIFE . . .  
CINDERELLA, BAKER: I WISH  
NARRATOR:—with his wife  
JACK: MORE THAN ANYTHING  
CINDERELLA, BAKER, JACK: MORE THAN THE MOON.

The Baker (Denis O'Hare) and his Wife (the wonderful Amy Adams) wish to have a child. But their house has been cursed, making them unable to conceive. What would make the Witch do such a thing? She explains that the Baker's par-

JONAS KONVALDZ



ents, who came to the cottage when he was a boy, were "a handsome couple, but not handsome neighbors." His mother, pregnant, developed an appetite for the vegetables that grew in the Witch's garden and sent her husband to steal them. Rapping, the Witch adds:

He said, "All right,"  
But it wasn't, quite  
'Cause I caught him in the autumn  
In my garden one night!  
He was robbing me,  
Raping me,  
Rooting through my rutabaga.

Most fairy tales have subtexts. Part of the fun of Act I of "Into the Woods" is being in on Sondheim and Lapine's blatantly Freudian reading of these stories. When Murphy sings "rooting through my rutabaga," you can't help but laugh, because she's so over the top, bumping and grinding as she recalls how her garden was violated. Did she want the Baker's father to violate her as well? Under Timothy Sheader's direction (Liam Steel is the co-director), that interpretation is a distinct possibility, but it's also a problem: can you apply Freudian theory to figures who are archetypes, not humans?

The Witch tells the Baker and his Wife that she'll cancel the curse if they can collect a number of items: a red cape, a slipper, a lock of hair, and other signature props from other stories. The cape, of course, belongs to Little Red Riding Hood (the adorable Sarah Stiles), who crisscrosses the stage on her way to her grandmother's house, as Cinderella copes with her abusive stepisters and Jack resists selling his beloved cow. Since Sheader treats this production as something of a sex farce, the Wolf (the multitalented, charismatic Ivan Hernandez) gets a lot of play, particularly after he "eats" Little Red Riding Hood and her granny (Tina Johnson), who, unlike the Witch, are not ambivalent about male attention.

But quirks are not character. Nor is our familiarity with fairy tales enough to make any of these figures whole. What exactly are we meant to feel, and for whom? When Sondheim does invest the text with pathos, it's quite something. Rapunzel (Tess Soltan), who, as a baby, was stolen and locked in a tower by the Witch, wants to escape so that she can connect with other people—specifically, a Prince (Cooper Grodin), who loves her. But the idea of Rapunzel not being safely

hidden away frightens the Witch, who takes scissors to her charge's beautiful hair to render her undesirable. As she slips, she sings "Stay with Me," one of the best songs about parental loss ever written:

What did I clearly say?  
Children must listen . . .  
Why could you not obey?  
Children should listen.  
What have I been to you?  
What would you have me be?  
Handsome like a prince?  
Ah, but I am old.  
I am ugly.  
I embarrass you . . .  
Don't you know what's out there in the world? . . .  
Who out there could love you more than I? . . .  
Stay with me.  
The world is dark and wild.  
Stay a child while you can be a child  
With me.

We all leave someone in order to become ourselves. Children leave parents, students leave mentors, lovers leave lovers. And those leave-takings are a kind of wish, too: to become something more than the person we've been. When, at the end of the first act, the Baker and his Wife achieve their dream of starting a family, we can't help feeling anxious for them, a response that may have something to do with the truth that Sondheim embeds in his lyrics: impermanence and longing are the dominant realities for us all. This is a brilliant way to end the show. So I was taken aback to realize that there was still an act to go. What could possibly happen?

What happens is that the show is drained of ideas, its fantasies made literal. The woods are threatened by a Giant (voiced by Glenn Close), whose presence provides Sheader a chance to engage in a bit of "War Horse"-style puppetry—spectacle for spectacle's sake. Arthur Laurents, speaking of Sondheim's work, said, "I'm not against fragmentation or using music that way, but I think it starts ass-backwards. What you needed to start with was an interesting character." The Giant is not an interesting character, even if he unites the other characters as their lives unravel—physical violence dominates the second act. It's as if Lapine and Sondheim felt obliged to stretch the show out to a standard length but ran out of ways to keep themselves—let alone the audience—interested in their characters. What might "Into the Woods" have been if it had allowed just one wish to be fully realized? ♦



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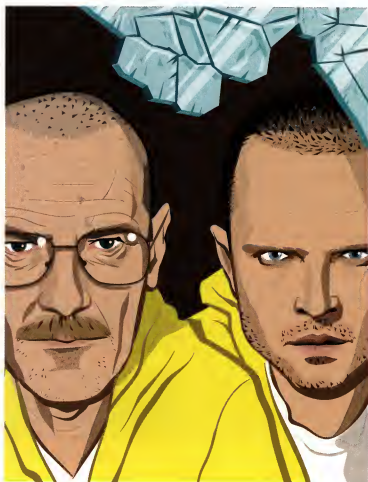
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ON TELEVISION

## CHILD'S PLAY

*"Breaking Bad" 's bad dad.*

BY EMILY NUSSBAUM



When the showrunner Vince Gilligan pitched "Breaking Bad" to AMC, he presented a mission statement, which amounted to a monumental spoiler: he would turn Mr. Chips into Scarface. The show's protagonist was Walter White, a high-school chemistry teacher who had a wife, a disabled teenage son, and a baby on the way. Given a diagnosis of late-stage lung cancer, Walt took up cooking meth to build a nest egg and, later on, to pay his medical bills. When faced with the dilemma of whether to kill a menacing thug, he scribbled down a panicked moral calculus. Con: "MURDER IS WRONG!" Pro:

"He'll kill your entire family if you let him go."

Ah, those were the days. Nobody could fault Walt when he strangled Krazy-8 with a bicycle lock, only two hours into the series. If television shows have conversion moments, that was mine. This was back in the chaotic, improvisatory days of Walt's entry into the drug business, when the acid he'd intended to dissolve a tattooed corpse ended up eating right through a bathtub, so that the "raspberry slushie" of those human remains seemed as though it might leave a stain on the whole world. In a way, it has. Each season, Walt has

made far less justifiable choices, each one changing him, with a throb of arrogance here, a swell of egotism there. We're deep in the Scarface stage; the hero of the show is now its villain. There are only ten episodes left, eight of them due next summer, a welcome deadline that has allowed Gilligan to shape his ending without the vamping that mars so many multi-season dramas. But, even if his show ends brilliantly, he's already told us that it won't end well.

Walt hasn't been the only one making choices, of course; the audience has, too, particularly the choice to keep tuning in. "Breaking Bad" is an explicitly addictive series, full of cliffhangers, with a visual flair that is rare for television. (Its directors this season have included the independent-film auteur Rian Johnson.) At once humane and nastily funny, it is full of indelible characters, such as Jesse, Walt's student turned tragic dupe, and Hank, Walt's blustery brother-in-law, who works for the D.E.A. And yet, for all the show's pleasures, its themes can be irredeemably grim, particularly now that the crutch of our sympathy for Walt has been yanked away. Each new episode arrives fraught with foreshadowing, with betrayal on the way—we know what has to happen, but not how. The show has shed its original skin, that of the antihero drama, in which we root for a bad boy in spite of ourselves. Instead, it's more like the late seasons of "The Sopranos," the first show that dared to punish its audience for loving a monster. This makes "Breaking Bad" a radical type of television, and also a very strange kind of must-watch: a show that you dread and crave at the same time.

Last season ended with a cathartic payoff, as Walt outsmarted, then murdered, his enemy, Gus, the leader of an internationally connected drug cartel. Walt could have left the criminal life, but, as usual, he chose to continue. (Call him Macbeth: he's stepped in blood so far, etc.) In this season's early episodes, Walt ramped up a new operation: he tugged his old partners (Jesse and Gus's enforcer, Mike) back into the game; the team pulled off a caper with an electromagnet, wiping out evidence; and, finally, they came up with a plan to hide their activities beneath the tents of a pest-removal company. Such problem solving

*"Breaking Bad" is a strange kind of must-watch: a show you dread and crave at once.*

has always been one of the show's great satisfactions, allowing "Breaking Bad" to feel as much like a how-to as a why-not-to. The neater the plotting, the more the audience can detach itself a bit—like Walt himself—and view events as a type of meta-puzzle: can the stakes rise even higher?

In the August 12th episode, as if to answer that question, a child was shot in the chest. It was the kicker to a sleek heist plot out of "Ocean's Eleven," as Walt and his team robbed a freight train of a valuable chemical. A henchman was set up, through sly narrative indirection, to look like a "redshirt" who might be sacrificed for the sake of the action. Instead, the redshirt pulled a gun, killing a boy who witnessed the crime, an act that struck many viewers as a brash perforation of the show's moral fabric.

In an ordinary drama, this would be true: causing a child's death is still the rare TV taboo, at least for those characters whose cause we are meant to be invested in. But "Breaking Bad" has always put children in danger, to the point that it's practically the show's trademark. Walt's rationalization is that he is protecting his family, but his most memorable targets are other people's children: first, Jesse's junkie girlfriend, whose air-traffic-controller father ended up crashing a plane in his grief over her death from an overdose, and then, last season, Brock, the son of another of Jesse's girlfriends. A video-game-loving five-year-old, Brock was the definition of collateral damage. Walt poisoned him so that he could frame his old boss for it, thus luring Jesse back as his partner, since he knew that Jesse would be horrified by anyone who would harm a child. When Brock was near death in the I.C.U., I spent hours arguing with friends about who was responsible. To my surprise, some of the most hard-core cynics thought it inconceivable that it could be Walt—that might make the show impossible to take, they said. But, of course, it did nothing of the sort. Once the truth came out, and Brock recovered, I read posts insisting that Walt was so discerning, so careful with the dosage, that Brock could never have died. The audience has been trained by cable television to react this way: to hate the nagging wives, the dumb civilians, who might sour the fun of masculine adventure. "Breaking Bad" increases

that cognitive dissonance, turning some viewers into not merely fans but enablers.

In this year's most frightening moment, Walt sat on a sofa and gazed down at Brock with measuring eyes. It had the air of a primal scene: the supervillain and his child victim. It also brought to mind the many children that Walt and his world have brushed up against, from Tomás, the eleven-year-old drug courier, to that child of feral junkies in Season 2, whose parents were Walt's customers. From early on, Walt's baby daughter, the smiling cherub Holly, has seemed to hover in the crosshairs. There's a shooting gallery of others: Walt's worshipful son, Walt, Jr.; Mike's beloved granddaughter; the kids of Walt's wife's former lover; and, this season, the daughter of Lydia, the cartel's newest and most unstable partner, a helicopter mom who's lost a blade.

In this bloodthirsty atmosphere, Gilligan has made several clever gambits to keep the show watchable, including swivelling background characters into the spotlight, where they can absorb the sympathy we once extended to Walt. The grizzled ex-cop Mike, with his dry wisecracks and his Realpolitik masculinity, fulfills our antihero needs. Jesse, once a doofus, has become downright astute. In the fourth episode, Gilligan pushed Skyler, Walt's wife, into the foreground, granting her strength and insight; in one gorgeous scene, this happened literally, as the camera swung from a closeup of Walt, with Skyler facing away behind him, to a shot of Skyler's expression, which was at once devastated and contemptuous. As Walt yammered on, his wife stepped into their pool and drifted under, her hair spreading. The gesture looked like a suicide attempt, but it was a stratagem: a drama designed to get her sister to take the kids out of the house, so that she could talk to her husband alone.

As with many of the show's psychological situations, Walt's conflict with his wife is at once epic and ordinary, and it centers on the question that troubles many bad marriages: What would be best for the children? During their showdown, Walt lectured Skyler for feeling guilty about her role in his criminal enterprise, saying, "You did what you had to do to protect your family and, I'm sorry, that doesn't make you a bad person. It makes

you a human being." It was Chicken Soup for the Sociopath Soul, like the noxious koans that Tony Soprano grew so fond of. But, unlike Carmela, Skyler called this what it was, a spin on "Shit happens." In his insistence that he maintain complete control, Walt will not allow Skyler to send their kids away, or let her separate from him and keep the kids with her. He will not even admit that they are at risk. It's the irresolvable irony of the character: Walt's justification for every act is that he's a great dad. But he's a monster precisely because he's so willing to place his kids in danger in order to prop up his self-image as a family man. "All I can do is wait," Skyler tells him. "Wait for what?" Walt asks. "For the cancer to come back," she replies.

The audience now waits along with Skyler, as the narrative builds toward a finale in which anything might happen, since there will be no need to keep us watching. (A baby might die, for instance, maybe by swallowing the ricin pellet that's tucked away in the Whites' home.) To escape this moral checkmate, Gilligan might shift yet another character into the foreground, revealing that the show is actually (as a friend suggested) a hero's tale in disguise. In that version of "Breaking Bad," the protagonist is not Walt but Hank, a man with no children. Despite injury and depression, Hank brings down a vast drug ring, even when he discovers that the kingpin is his own brother-in-law, a sneering brainiac who has always considered himself superior. But because Hank is decent, and the show is on the side of good, Hank triumphs. That ending would have the virtue of symmetry, and pleasure, and closure, and relief, for the suffering audience.

Right now, however, it's easier to imagine someone innocent coming to harm. Early this season, Skyler wandered into the living room, only to find her husband watching TV with Walt, Jr., baby Holly cradled in his arms. "Say hello to my little friend!" Al Pacino shouted on the screen, spraying gunfire. Walt, Jr., laughed and said the line along with Pacino, grinning with excitement. "Everyone dies in this movie, don't they?" Walt asked. The look in his wife's eyes wasn't anger, or even fear. It was dread. She'd seen that movie, after all. She knew how it ends. ♦

## CREEP SHOWS

*"Cosmopolis" and "Compliance."*

BY DAVID DENBY

The director David Cronenberg has climbed back into an automobile. In "Crash," his collision saturnalia of 1996, adapted from a morbidly sexual novel by J. G. Ballard, Cronenberg staged violent and erotic happenings in a kind of vehicular theatre of the imagination. He has now adapted the work of an even more talented apocalyptic fantasist, Don De-

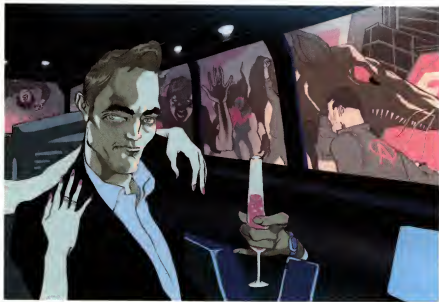
Launceaux, his intention to cross Manhattan for a haircut. But his progress through the city is impeded by the traffic-snarling appearance of the President.

In "Crash," speed and recklessness behind the wheel kept the movie going, but this time life in a car has literally slowed to a crawl. Various people visit Eric, including two twerpy geniuses,

which, stubbornly, improbably, continues to rise.

An erudite but vacant young man, Eric lives mainly within the pulsing circuits of electronic information. We can feel DeLillo's loathing for the dematerialized world of financial manipulation; he makes Eric a kind of science-fiction metaphor of a human being, and Cronenberg cast the right man for a living cyborg. Pattinson has large eyes, heavy eyebrows, a soft voice. He's sombre and quiet, a minimalist actor, but he has just enough tension to keep us interested in this intelligent creep. For Eric, the past doesn't exist, the present is simply money zipping around the globe, the future is his to inhabit. Inside his car, he lives at a still point, but the market economy creates hysterical activity all around him. Though DeLillo wrote the novel a few years after the tech collapse of 2000, it now seems prescient about the much greater collapse of 2008. "We're speculating in a void," as one of the twerps says, but that remark no longer sounds extravagant—not after billions of dollars bet on derivatives and "synthetic credit products" has disappeared into the air. And the book's anti-capitalist theatrics in the streets seem a very accurate anticipation of the Occupy Wall Street movement. DeLillo even understood the ambivalence of the protest: did these people hate capitalism or were they afraid that they had been left behind by it?

Cronenberg has retained much of DeLillo's dialogue, which is, by turns, clipped and expansive and idea-studded—a kind of postmodernist exposition of how money functions in cyberspace. And he has come up with an equivalent to DeLillo's curt and cool equivoque—a style of filmmaking that is classically measured and calm, without an extra shot or cut. The interior of the car is designed in shades of black and dark gray, with chrome trim and blue, glowing screens. Despite the constrictions, Cronenberg keeps the space handsome and active. For long stretches, "Cosmopolis" is dreamy and funny, in an off-centered way. At one point, the limo pulls alongside a taxi, and Eric steps into the cab and sits next to a pretty young woman (Sarah Gadon), who turns out to be his wife of twenty-two days. They have a polite conversation; they agree to meet for sex. But as the violence outside grows more frantic, and the money disappears, the tone of the



Robert Pattinson is the hero of David Cronenberg's adaptation of the DeLillo novel.

Lillo, whose novel "Cosmopolis" (2003) has furnished him with a superbly written text set mostly in a stretch limo. Cronenberg has made an eccentric and beautiful-looking movie—a languid, deadpan, conceptualist joke. The hero is one of those young capitalist predators who have been haunting American fiction (in, say, "The Bonfire of the Vanities" and "American Psycho"). His name is Eric Michael Packer, and he's played by the hesitant, long-jawed Robert Pattinson, the gallant and fastidious vampire of the "Twilight" series. Eric is a twenty-eight-year-old asset manager whose life is at once completely protected and utterly vulnerable. He steps into his limo in the morning in a Gucci suit and dark glasses, and an-

barely shaving, who stare at handheld devices and give investment counsel; an old lover (Juliette Binoche), who has sex with him among the black leather couchettes while offering to find a Rothko for his collection (Eric wants the Rothko Chapel—the entire chapel); and a doctor who gives him his daily prostate exam. Outside the limousine, the tawdry and electric city slowly passes, as if in a moving diorama. Eventually, the car is engulfed by a ferocious and madcap anti-capitalist rally. Vague threats materialize—someone unknown may be trying to kill Eric. All the while, he is watching millions of dollars vanish: he has placed an enormous, heavily leveraged bet on the fall of the yuan,



movie darkens. Eric uncoils, slowly losing his will to dominate. He becomes masochistic and virtually indifferent to everything but the most extreme body sensations. When John Updike reviewed the novel in these pages, he asked why we should care about the possible death of this arrogant cipher. A good question, but I'm not sure that emotional involvement is the goal of either the novel or the movie. A certain ghastly possibility—a glimpse of a stone-dead future temperament—has been made potent for us. But it doesn't go unchallenged. At the end, Eric meets the world he has left behind, in the person of a former employee, the disheveled, rasping Paul Giamatti. The future may have overtaken the present, but the clay beneath Eric's feet is still capable of active revolt.

When "Compliance" was shown at the Sundance Festival, last January, some people in the audience got so upset that they started shouting during the screening; others simply walked out. Watching "Compliance" recently, I also began to squirm and talk back, but not because I disliked the movie, which I think is brilliant. American movies are saturated in physical violence; this one is devoted to spiritual violence. "Compliance," an independent film written and directed by Craig Zobel, is about something serious—our all too human habit of obedience when we are faced with authority. The movie is driven by an urgent moral inquiry, yet it has the mesmerizing detail and humor of a very idiosyncratic fiction. Zobel's setting is a fast-service chicken franchise in Ohio. The sixtyish Sandra (Ann Dowd), the manager, has a lot on

her hands—a heavy Friday-night crowd, not enough bacon in the larder, and a few young employees who slack off when they can. The phone rings: a man identifying himself as a police officer (Pat Healy) says that one of the girls working the front counter, Becky (Dreama Walker), a pretty teen-age blonde, has stolen some money from a customer's purse. He has the victim sitting next to him, he says, and also surveillance footage of the crime. Sandra, a good-natured sort but eager to stay in control, then does what he instructs her to do—confronts the baffled Becky in a back room, searches her things, and, finally, strip-searches her. (The cop says it's easier than hauling Becky down to the station and booking her.) The customers come and go, the fries sizzle in fat, the bacon runs out. Sandra, as she deals with the police, keeps the restaurant working, while the other employees, fond of Becky but hapless, take part in her detention and humiliation, doing what the man on the phone orders. Zobel works close to his characters, catching them at moments of doubt before they press ahead. The actors, inspired by the attempt to do something daring, display a perfect balance of casualness and intensity. For this fable to work at all, you have to believe everything in it, and experience the girl's plight as a genuine violation. I didn't detect a false note: the rhythm of the movie is workaday and unforced, the restaurant details so oddly right that you feel sure you understand everyone who works there.

In the old days of Soviet police terror, the man on the phone would have been a smashing success: he's polite, reasonable, seemingly candid, but dominating and manipulative. Our suspicions, as an audi-

ence, are aroused from the beginning. Is he really a cop? A prankster? Perhaps the call is part of some dubious psychological experiment, like the notorious Milgram and Zimbardo affairs, in which university psychologists successfully ordered willing subjects to commit cruelties against other subjects. The people at the franchise are all decent enough, and it's enraging to see them so easily bullied—that's why you feel like shouting at the screen. Of course, none of them are too swift. Who ever heard of a cop remaining on the phone for an hour in order to persuade people at a crime scene to do police work? Why doesn't anyone call a lawyer—or simply call the police to find out what in the world is going on? The answer is that the employees are all caught in a web of coercion in which they want to please their master, and each cruel act they commit seems to set up and justify the next. They want to get the affair over with. "Compliance" is a small movie, but it provides insight into large and frightening events, like the voluntary participation of civilians in the terrible crimes of the last century. For the record, the movie is based on "police" telephone calls made during the past two decades to McDonald's and other such franchises, after which managers performed strip searches on female employees. I hasten to add that "Compliance" is not an exposé of fast-food working conditions. Zobel and his actors and crew have discovered something cold and lewd in the human heart and have found an effortlessly expressive way of dramatizing it. ♦

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## CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Frank Cotham, must be received by Sunday, August 26th. The finalists in the August 6th contest appear below. We will announce the winner, and the finalists in this week's contest, in the September 10th issue. The winner receives a signed print of the cartoon. Any resident of the United States, Canada (except Quebec), Australia, the United Kingdom, or the Republic of Ireland age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit [newyorker.com/captioncontest](http://newyorker.com/captioncontest).

### THE WINNING CAPTION



"Stop sending me spam!"  
Sean Lynch, Brooklyn, N.Y.



### THE FINALISTS

"Worst internship ever."  
Mike Tringale, Washington, D.C.

"Golden parachute, my ass."  
George D. Mulligan, Ardmore, Pa.

"If I go, page 4 of our report goes with me."  
Robert B. Pierce, Oberlin, Ohio

### THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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